

Tools to Evolve Your COVID-19 Retail Strategy: Seminar Summary

OVERVIEW

On May 28, 2020, the CDC Foundation, in collaboration with Leavitt Partners, National Retail Federation, and Retail Industry Leaders Association, hosted an online seminar for retail leaders to support them in making decisions that will mitigate the risks of COVID-19 to their staff and customers. The seminar began with presentations from public health leaders, who provided timely insights into existing resources and tools and presented a risk analysis framework that businesses can use to inform operational decisions. Then, retail leaders illustrated how to apply the framework by sharing examples of risk mitigation in their stores. The framework and instructions for using it are now available for download on the [CDC Foundation's website](#).

SPEAKERS

- Dr. Judy Monroe, CDC Foundation President and CEO
- Governor Mike Leavitt, former U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services
- Christine Brandt, Senior Principal-Senior Counsel, Retail Business Operations, Macy's, Inc.
- Brian Dodge, President, Retail Industry Leaders Association
- Margaret Kitt, MD, MPH, Deputy Director, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)
- Graham Luce, Senior Vice President and General Counsel, BJ's Wholesale Club
- Matthew Shay, President and CEO, National Retail Federation

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- We must adapt how we do business in order to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provides guidance on how to limit the spread of COVID-19. Individual retailers will have to determine how to implement this guidance in their situation.
- A framework¹ developed by Leavitt Partners can be applied alongside guidance to assess a retailer's unique setting and limit the exposure of the virus for employees and customers.
- Retailers must emphasize and communicate the importance of safety for employees and customers. Safety is the new customer loyalty program.

¹ Poelman, J., Doxey, P., Hanson, A., & Heins, Z. (2020). *Understanding the coronavirus and situational characteristics: A framework for individuals and businesses for mitigating risk* [White paper]. Leavitt Partners.

Overview of COVID-19 and Available CDC Tools – Dr. Margaret Kitt, NIOSH

Dr. Kitt, Deputy Director of NIOSH, stated that the virus is thought to spread mainly from person to person through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes or talks. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. Some recent studies have suggested that COVID-19 may be spread by people who are not showing symptoms.

Ways to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 include use of personal protective measures (e.g., handwashing, cough etiquette, and face coverings) at home and social distancing while in community settings.

CDC Tools and Resources

- [Interim Guidance](#): Strategies and recommendations for employers responding to COVID-19, including those seeking to resume normal or phased business operations.
- [Workplace Decision Tool](#): Offers a tool to help workplaces decide if they are ready to open.
- [Workers at High Risk](#): Approaches for workers at high risk.
- [Cleaning and Disinfection](#): CDC and EPA guidance on cleaning and disinfection to get workplaces safe and ready for return.

Situational Characteristics to Consider and How They Apply to Different Settings

The framework consists of seven “situational characteristics,” which are elements of environments or situations that may be categorized as higher or lower risk: movement, duration, proximity, respiratory output, group size, touch, and congestion. Retail practitioners can apply the framework to solve practical problems when guidance is not available. Please see the [Appendix](#) for a more detailed description of the framework.

Retail Scenario Planning and Panel Discussion

1. **High-touch customer sales**
 - a. **High-Risk Considerations**: Using the situational framework above, “higher risk” factors that need to be mitigated are duration, proximity, touch, and possible congestion.
 - b. **Mitigation**: Retailers can mitigate some high-risk factors by shortening the duration of customer and associate engagement; using gloves; and keeping customers 6 feet apart.
2. **Service counters and checkout**
 - a. **High-Risk Considerations**: Using the situational framework above, “higher risk” factors that need to be mitigated are duration, proximity, touch, and congestion.
 - b. **Mitigation**: Retailers can mitigate some high-risk factors by reducing duration; adding floor decals and signage to remind customers of social distancing; using loudspeaker reminders; and limiting capacity to 20% of a store’s normal capacity.
3. **Loading dock**
 - a. **High-Risk Considerations**: Using the situational framework, “higher risk” factors that need to be mitigated are duration, proximity, respiratory output, touch, and possible congestion.
 - b. **Mitigation**: Retailers can mitigate some high-risk factors by limiting duration when possible; using automated material handling equipment when available; providing face

coverings and gloves to employees; and limiting the number of employees at a loading or entrances at any given time.

Collaboration with Public Health

Collaboration with local public health officials is important for retailers and may include consultation and relationships with local departments of health and local OSHA representatives. Two-way communication helps to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and keep customers and employees healthy. For a listing of state and territorial public health websites, please [click here](#).

CDC Foundation Tools

The CDC Foundation acknowledges that guidance is not a one-size-fits-all approach. A structured approach, such as applying the seven situational characteristics to one's unique setting, will support retailers in assessing the risk profile of their own setting and making plans to mitigate risk.

To download tools and apply the framework to one's own settings, visit:

<https://www.cdcfoundation.org/covid-19-seminars>

APPENDIX

Situational Characteristic	Lower Risk Characteristic		Higher Risk Characteristic	
Movement How do people move around in the space?	Directed	Movement is restrained or highly controlled, people are confined to a specific area, little intermingling.	Undirected	Movement is unrestrained or uncontrolled, people can wander in the space, frequent intermingling.
Duration How long are people in this space?	Less than 15 minutes	Less than 15 minutes is typically spent in the space.	Greater than 15 minutes	More than 15 minutes is typically spent in the place.
Proximity How close are people in this space?	Greater than 6 feet	It is possible, either naturally or with minimal interventions, to maintain a 6-foot distance.	Less than 6 feet	It is not possible to maintain a 6-foot distance; the activity cannot be done if distance is maintained.
Group Size How many people are in the space?	Less than recommended limit	A small group of people, mostly part of the same social circle.	Greater than recommended limit	A large group of people from different households and social circles.
Respiratory Output How are people breathing in the space?	Normal	People are breathing normally, low respiratory output.	Increased	People are breathing heavily, from exercising, laughing, cheering, singing, etc.
Touch How do people engage with objects or fixtures in the space?	Low	People do not interact much with each other or with objects in the space.	High	People frequently interact with each other or touch objects in the space.
Congestion Are there points of high congestion?	Low	The design of the space and activity do not result in congregations of people (e.g. entry points, lines, security, etc.)	High	Because of the design of the space or the nature of the activity, people must gather closely together at times.

These situational characteristics help categorize the "risk" level of a space and can be used as a prompt to think through what mitigation strategies can be employed to offset risk.