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St. Joseph County, Indiana, Issues Requirements For Restarting Business

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Highlights

St. Joseph County Department of Health released a public health order, effective May 4, outlining requirements for restarting business.

Businesses that are open to public must provide hand sanitizers made up of at least 60 percent alcohol at doors and near high touch activity areas.

Individuals are required to wear masks in enclosed public spaces and businesses where six feet of separation cannot be maintained, with some exceptions.

On May 3, the St. Joseph County Department of Health issued Public Health Order 1-2020, following up on Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb's May 1 announcement of his plan to reopen the state. The local public health order establishes additional guidelines in reopening businesses, which took effect May 4 and continue until July 4. The health department reserved the right to later extend the order, as it is intended to remain in effect until 70 percent of the population of St. Joseph County has developed immunity to COVID-19.

Changes for Businesses

Businesses that are open to customers must provide hand sanitizers made up of at least 60 percent alcohol. The hand sanitizers must be provided at entrances and near any high-touch surfaces.

Changes for Individuals

All individuals must wear a face covering when they enter an enclosed public space or place of business unless either:

- The individual has a medical exception
- The face covering prevents the person from receiving services

To comply, the face covering must cover both the person's mouth and nose.

The restriction applies in any business that is open unless the place of business can maintain and ensure six feet of physical distance between both customers and employees. For example, someone alone in an office would not be required to wear a face covering, but may be required to wear one to enter the company's breakroom. Individuals at a restaurant may remove their masks while dining, but are expected to wear their masks when entering, going to the counter or restroom, and when leaving.

Enforcement

The St. Joseph County Health Department will investigate claims of noncompliance, not the St. Joseph County, South Bend, or Mishawaka police departments. Dr. Mark Fox, St. Joseph County's Deputy Health Officer, warned that businesses failing to comply with the order could potentially be shut down by the department. The health department has not yet commented on whether it will issue any fines for breaching the order.

Differing Approaches Throughout Indiana

While St. Joseph County and many other Indiana counties are beginning to reopen businesses with similar restrictions, some counties are taking more cautious approaches. For example, Marion County extended its stay-at-home order to remain in effect until at least May 15. Similar extensions of the stay-at-home order were ordered in Lake County (until May 11), Monroe County (until May 15), and Cass County (until May 18).