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For Immediate Release - April 7, 2020

Board of Health Issues Order Regulating Grocery Stores, Supermarkets, and Convenience Stores - Effective Immediately

NORTHAMPTON - Today, the Northampton Board of Health and Public Health Director Merridith O'Leary, in order to reduce COVID-19 transmission in the community, issued the following order regarding grocery stores, supermarkets, and convenience stores:

1. Customer Caps

All grocery stores, supermarkets, and convenience stores shall be subject to the following customer occupancy limits, and no grocery store, supermarket or convenience store shall allow the number of customers to exceed the following limits:

- Retail sales floor area less than 2400 sf, occupancy 10
- Retail sales floor area between 2401 sf - 4800 sf, occupancy 20
- Retail sales floor area between 4801 sf - 12,000 sf, occupancy 30
- Retail sales floor area between 12,001 - 24,000 sf, occupancy 50
- Retail sales floor area greater than 24000 sf, occupancy 100.

Nothing in this paragraph shall be construed to limit the number of employees in the store at any given time, nor shall it regulate any areas of the store other than the sales floor area where customers shop.

Any grocery store, supermarket or convenience store that believes that it can manage more than the occupancy limits set forth above may apply to the Director of Public Health for a permit to increase occupancy. Such application shall contain a narrative description supported by annotated floor plans demonstrating how the store intends to implement policies and procedures above and beyond those required herein to manage an increased occupancy load. The Director shall allow increased occupancy where she finds clear and convincing evidence that the proposed extra protective measures will assure the distancing and sanitation requirements of this Order. The decision of the Director of Public Health may be appealed to the Board of Health by written notice of appeal to be received no more than five (5) days after the decision of the Director.

2. Monitoring of Entering and Exiting of Customers

- All grocery stores and supermarkets shall limit entry to a single door or set of doors and shall limit exiting to another single door or set of doors.

- All grocery stores and supermarkets shall post an employee at the entrance and an employee at the exit to count customers entering and exiting so as to assure that the number of customers in the store does not exceed the limits set by this order.
- The exterior of all grocery stores, supermarkets and convenience stores shall be marked at six-foot intervals for customers waiting for entry in order to maintain social distancing.

3. Social Distancing

- All grocery stores, supermarkets and convenience stores shall mark the floor of the store at six-foot intervals at all cashier lines, at the delicatessen counter, at the pharmacy counter, and any other location where customers tend to congregate.
- All grocery stores, supermarkets and convenience stores shall designate each aisle as one-way, demarking the direction of each aisle. Each aisle shall also be marked at six-foot intervals for customers in the aisle to maintain social distancing.
- All grocery stores and supermarkets shall assign an employee to monitor the aisles to assure that the customers are following the aisle direction and six-foot social distancing within the aisles.

4. Cleaning and Sanitizing

- All grocery stores, supermarkets and convenience stores shall provide a hand wash station or hand sanitizer at all entrances and exits. All customers must wash hands or use hand sanitizers upon entrance.
- All grocery stores and supermarkets shall provide gloves for customers at the store entrance.
- All grocery stores and supermarkets shall provide disinfectant wipes at store entrance for customers to use to sanitize shopping carts or baskets.
- All grocery stores, supermarkets and convenience stores self-checkout stations must be disinfected between customers by store employees.
- All grocery stores, supermarkets and convenience stores point of sale systems must be disinfected after each customer by store employees.
- All grocery stores, supermarkets and convenience stores must install and maintain plastic partitions at all cash registers by an effective date of April 11, 2020.

For more information, contact the Health Department at healthdepartment@northamptonma.gov or 413-587-1214.