



# Recommended Business Practices for Heating Fuel Dealers During the Coronavirus Pandemic

It is imperative that your company take precautions to protect the health and safety of your employees and customers. As individual states and localities reopen their economies, they may establish guidelines for resuming daily work activities and interfacing with customers. The below best practices recommended by NEFI are intended to complement these guidelines and do not replace government rules and regulations. **In addition to implementing the best practices below, NEFI strongly recommends consulting the [CDC website](#) and fully adopting all [state reopening guidelines](#). Remember most labor practices are based on state laws and regulations. Many of these laws, rules, and best practices are now evolving rapidly. What may have been appropriate earlier in the pandemic, may not be appropriate now. All businesses should consult with legal counsel and a qualified physician on these matters.**

## *Recommended Practices for Everyone*

- Frequently wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- If soap and running water are unavailable, use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Implement the [CDC's social distancing measures](#), including maintaining six feet of distance from colleagues, employees and customers. Always wear a mask when social distancing cannot be maintained.
- Avoid contact with individuals who are showing symptoms of COVID-19, including fever, coughing, shortness of breath, chills, and new loss of taste or smell. Please refer to the [CDC website](#) for the full list of symptoms.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue and dispose of it immediately, then wash your hands.
- Communicate regularly with suppliers, employees, and customers to keep them informed of any changes to your business.
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## *Recommended Practices for Company-Customer Interactions*

- Whenever possible rely on phone, text, email, teleconferencing, or other electronic methods to communicate with customers, instead of in-person conversations.
- If available, wear facemasks and gloves on all service calls. Follow established glove and mask protocols, including proper cleaning or disposal.
- Whether or not gloves are used, employees should wash or sanitize their hands before arrival at a job site and immediately upon departure.
- Fuel deliveries made to customers' homes present low risk factors. However, if possible, send delivery and service invoices by mail or switch to electronic invoicing instead of leaving invoices at the door. Utilize online delivery or service requests and customer payments to avoid unnecessary customer interactions.

- Reassure customers by notifying them of the precautions you are taking to keep their families safe and healthy.
- In general, avoid all direct contact with customers and maintain the maximum distance possible: at least six feet.
- On service calls, if the customer has separate access to their heating or air conditioning system, request in advance that they make the area available to you directly, e.g., opening bulkheads, cellar doors, etc.
- If the unit is a hot air or air conditioning system, try to avoid opening parts of the system through which air flows, including filters. Rather than installing filters, leave them behind for the customer to install.
- Before entering a customer's home, ask if the household is experiencing symptoms, including fever, coughing, shortness of breath, chills or new loss of taste or smell. If the customer answers in the affirmative, contact your employer for further instructions prior to entering.
- If an employee develops COVID-19 symptoms, immediately notify all customers who the employee was in contact with while symptomatic and during the 48-hour period prior to symptom onset. If the employee followed the above protocols, the customer's risk of exposure should be minimal. See section below for further guidance related to symptomatic employees and potential exposure.

#### *Recommended Practices for Employer-Employee Interactions*

- Follow the guidelines above for minimizing risk of exposure.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces that are touched frequently. These include desks, keyboards, office and mobile phones, doorknobs, faucet handles, vehicle door handles, steering wheels, etc.
- Instruct delivery and service personnel to perform their duties without interacting in person with office staff whenever possible. For example, electronically send work orders, delivery tickets and driver routes.
- Employees should be instructed to immediately notify their employer of a potential exposure to COVID-19. Incidents of "potential exposure" include being in a household or other confined space with a presumably infectious person; or coming within six feet of such an individual.
- Employers should measure a potentially exposed employee's temperature and assess symptoms prior to them starting work. Temperature checks should happen before the individual enters the office or jobsite.
- A potentially exposed employee should be required to wear a facemask, whenever in the workplace or at a jobsite, for 14 days after last exposure. Employers can issue facemasks or approve alternative or homemade face coverings in the event of shortages (sewing patterns for facemasks are available under *Other Important Resources*).
- Employees should be sent home immediately if symptoms develop. Advise the employee to follow [CDC guidelines for managing symptoms at home](#). His or her workspace and any company vehicles the employee used should be immediately cleaned and disinfected. Identify individuals who were potentially exposed to the sick employee while he or she experienced symptoms or during the 2 days prior to symptom onset. Those potentially exposed employees should be subject to the protocol described above.
- Employees who are symptomatic and isolated may return to work after meeting conditions described by the CDC, as outlined [here](#).
- Allow employees to stay home to care for sick family members or for children if childcare is otherwise unavailable.

- Where possible, segment work teams into isolated smaller units so that an outbreak in one unit does not necessarily affect all.
- Understand laws and regulations related to sick time and paid family medical leave, and how they apply to essential employees. Contact your state industry association, state labor department, or a qualified legal or HR professional on the latest employee leave requirements.