

Vermont Reopening Retail Checklist

As we near the reopening of retail stores, the first thing on everyone's mind is "how?". Reopening is not going to be "business as usual" but we're here to support you.



We've created a checklist with the information we've compiled from our national partners like [National Retail Federation](#), [Retail Industry Leaders](#), and searches on the web, including a helpful guide from [Investopedia](#), that comprehensive list is just one tool that will help you get up and running again. Visit vtrga.org for more helpful information.

Prepare your employees

Making sure to communicate with and prepare your employees will be imperative for reopening.

- Plan your staff schedule. Reopening your store will be a phased-in approach, which may require a lighter staff. Will you bring all employees back or some of them for the reopening phase? Once you decide on your reopening team, get in touch with them!
- Make sure they're in good health. Employers are required to monitor employees' health each time they show up for work.
 - *Share these four questions with them.* Encourage them to consider these questions prior to starting work their first day back and every day after:
 1. Have you been confirmed positive for COVID-19?
 2. Are you currently experiencing, or recently experienced, any acute respiratory illness symptoms such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath?
 3. Have you been in close contact with any persons who have been confirmed positive for COVID-19?
 4. Have you been in close contact with any persons who have traveled and are also exhibiting acute respiratory illness symptoms?
 - If an employee answers YES to any questions 1-4, refer to [Vermont Department of Health, Center for Disease Control](#).
 - The State of Vermont requires that:
 - *Each employee must complete training on [mandatory health and safety requirements as provided by VOSHA](#), or another training program that meets or exceeds the VOSHA-provided standard. Employers must maintain proof of training.*
 - *Each employee is screened* prior to the start of their shift. You are also required, to the extent feasible, to take and record each employee's temperature.
 - *Each business must designate a health and safety officer* for each shift that will
 - ensure compliance with the Executive Order, all addenda and your health and safety policies/manual, etc including screening employees with the above questions and temperature reading.
 - Has the authority to stop or modify activities to ensure work conforms with the mandatory health and safety requirements
- **Share your health and safety plan with your employees** This plan will provide all of the pertinent information and policies that you have set, or are required by the State, that you, your employees, and your customers will need to be aware of and practice daily. Walk through duties and responsibilities of employees as they return to work. Have employees sign the plan to show they have reviewed and understand it.

Get your inventory ready

Make sure you're stocked and ready for customers to return

- *Do an inventory count.* Get a handle on what you have on-hand and make sure the number of items you have in stock matches what you have in your inventory system.
- *Run the necessary product and sales reports.* Figure out what items to sell and promote by running product performance reportings. Admittedly, historical data may not be as helpful, given the massive shift in consumer spending, but looking at what people were purchasing this time last year (and perhaps what they were buying pre-lockdown) could help, particularly when combined with: [Online search trends](#) and [Social media listening data](#)
- *Make sure that your displays are easy to shop, and relevant* to the times and seasonally appropriate. There are many trends in retail right now that have changed due to the Pandemic. Be sure to check what makes sense for your store

Prepare your necessary equipment, supplies, and technologies

To ensure that your store runs smoothly, make sure that all the required services, supplies, and technologies are up and running. Here's a quick list of what to go over before you reopen:

- *Inspect your physical store* to ensure that it is safe for reopening. Did anything go amiss while you were away? Things like damages to the property or signs of forced entry require immediate action. If there are any issues, call your landlord ASAP.
- *Confirm that the utilities are working.*
 - If your electricity and water connection were disconnected, call the utility companies to ensure that they're in working order before you reopen.
 - The same thing goes for your phone and internet connection, as it's more important than ever to stay connected.
- *Make sure your security equipment is up and running.* Test your security system (cameras, alarms, etc.) to ensure that they're in working order.
- *Make sure your POS and retail management systems are good to go.* You need to be able to ring up sales and serve customers efficiently, and your business needs to be armed with a working POS to do that.
- *Double-check other gadgets and equipment.* If you have in-store tablets, TVs, displays, sound systems, etc., confirm that they're in working condition and are ready for your reopening.
- *Set up your displays.* Revamp your in-store and window displays with attractive arrangements. Bear in mind that with social distancing, you may need to position your store fixtures and shelves farther apart to encourage people to stay at least 6 feet away from each other.

Implement health and safety measures

Plan to take steps to protect your staff and customers when you reopen your store.

- *Display signage at entrances, on social media, and around your store.* Set up signs at the entrance reminding customers to go home if they are feeling sick. Other important announcements — such as changes to your policies — should also be displayed prominently. The State of Vermont will be providing templates.
- *Have in-store signage reminding people about physical distancing.* Consider adding markers or decals on your floor, particularly near the checkout counter, so people know where to stand in line.
- *Make sure to order personal protective equipment.* Arm your employees with protective equipment like masks, hand sanitizer and cleaning supplies. Give your employees personal protective equipment so they can limit the chances of catching the illness.
- *Consider different ways to protect your employees, your customers, and yourself*

- Can you open doors and windows to promote air flow?
- Install plexiglass at the checkout counter. If possible, set up plexiglass at the checkout area to protect cashiers as they ring up sales.
- Increase the availability of hand sanitizers and wipes. If possible, give customers hand sanitizers and wipes so they can clean their hands, baskets, and shopping carts. If access to these cleaning supplies is limited, designate an employee who can regularly clean carts and baskets after customers use them.
- *Plan to frequently clean high-touch areas.* Double down on cleaning and sanitizing your store by frequently wiping down shelves, displays, and high-touch areas. Consider setting a timer or making this a job specific to one employee with a manager verifying that cleaning is done.
- *Devise a plan to keep your fitting rooms safe.* There are no scientific data to indicate that clothing items are a major means of spreading the coronavirus. Any risk from this exposure is likely to be very low. But you may want to consider requiring customers to wear masks and gloves or use hand sanitizer prior to entering the fitting room. Consider leaving clothes that have been tried on in the back for 24-48 hours after a customer tries them on.
- *Consider whether you'll adjust store hours.* Long hours, particularly during this period, can cause stress in your team. Consider shortening the hours that your store is open to the public to give your staff time to clean, replenish stock, and rest.

Get the word out

Next up, you need to drive awareness and traffic to your store when you re-open. A big part of doing this lies in communicating with your customers.

- *Cover your bases with customer communications.* Tell people that you're open, what you've been up to, about your new policies, and why they should come back.
- *Utilize multiple communication channels,* including email and social media to make sure that shoppers don't miss your announcements.
- *Consider watching our [social media](#) and [e-commerce](#) webinars.* They'll walk you through the basics of both concepts.

Think about putting a plan together

Your COVID-19 return to work plan should include the following:

- **Anticipated return to work date.** With the uncertainty that COVID-19 has brought, it's important to give clear information and dates when employees are to return to work whenever possible. Be sure to be flexible with your dates, though, as local and state orders are frequently updated.
- **Disinfecting and cleaning measures.** Because COVID-19 can remain on surfaces long after they've been touched, it's important that your business frequently cleans and disinfects the facility. Some best practices include:
 - Cleaning and disinfecting all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, keyboards, telephones, handrails and doorknobs.
 - Discouraging workers from using other workers' phones, desks, offices, or other tools and equipment, when possible. If necessary, clean and disinfect them before and after use.
 - Providing disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces can be wiped down by employees before each use.
 - Use [EPA approved chemicals](#), tested for effectiveness on COVID-19
 - Find a list of [Commercial Cleaners in Vermont here](#). *VRGA does not endorse any of these service providers. Rather we wanted to help provide you easy access to contact information.

- **Social distancing protocol.** [Social distancing](#) is the practice of deliberately increasing the physical space between people to avoid spreading illness. In terms of COVID-19, social distancing best practices for businesses can include:
 - Avoiding gatherings of 10 or more people
 - Instructing workers to maintain at least 6 feet of distance from other people
 - Hosting meetings virtually when possible
 - Limiting the number of people on the job site to essential personnel only
 - Discouraging people from shaking hands
- **Employee safety training.** Your return to work plan must include VOSHA's [safety training](#) for all employees. Your plan should also discuss the following safety training topics:
 - [How to put on and take off PPE properly](#)
 - [The signs and symptoms of COVID-19](#)
 - [Instructions on proper hand washing](#)

Other considerations you may want to consider

- **Mental health considerations.** The COVID-19 pandemic has increased stress levels of employees across the country. It's important that your return to work plan includes guidance for managing employee mental health concerns when employees return to work. The CDC has [information and resources](#) for coping with increased stress levels..
- **Process for individualized requests.** Employees will be returning to work and facing different situations at home or with their health. Your return to work plan should include information about how employees can go about making individualized requests for changes to a return to work plan. Some may have underlying health conditions that put them at greater risk of severe illness with COVID-19, meaning they may not be able to fully return to work. Others may be facing unique child care arrangements due to schools and daycares being closed. Be flexible and compassionate in your response to individualized requests.
- **How you will meet the [ACCD health and safety guidelines](#)** for reopening your business including:
 - Obtaining thermometers to use for employee temperature checks, and having a record of those temperature checks
 - Conducting and documenting pre-shift health screenings of employees
 - Designating a health and safety officer
 - [Posting signage](#) Additional signage will be coming from ACCD soon.
 - Face Covering requirements Employees must wear face coverings over their nose and mouth when in the presence of others. In the case of retail cashiers, a translucent shield or "sneeze guard" is acceptable in lieu of a mask. Businesses and non-profit and government entities may require customers or clients to wear masks.
- **Know your occupancy.** Non-essential retail operations are limited to:
 - 25% (twenty-five percent) of approved fire safety occupancy; or
 - 1 customer per 200 square feet; or
 - 10 total customers and staff combined, whichever is greater.