



Agriculture and Markets

The industry specific guidance below was developed by the Department in response to the pandemic and is no longer mandatory. These archived documents are made available as a public reference and resource only.

Industry partners should refer to [New York Forward Guidance](#) for the most up-to-date information regarding COVID-19. For more information, please visit <https://agriculture.ny.gov/coronavirus>.



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**INTERIM GUIDANCE FOR
GROCERY HOME DELIVERIES AND ECOMMERCE GROCERY HOME DELIVERIES
DATED: April 18, 2020**

Grocery home-delivery services and mail/online (ecommerce) grocery home-delivery services are options for shoppers to have convenient access to food without physically visiting a grocery food store. While these options offer convenience to the shopper, it is vital that the food shipped or delivered is done so in a manner that protects the food items from becoming unsafe or contaminated during transit. Products that are mishandled can be damaged or may cause a foodborne illness (food poisoning) if consumed. Common carriers such as UPS, FedEx, USPS, etc. and/or those providing in person delivery by either a retail store employee, contract delivery employee, contract delivery service such as UberEats, Instacart, etc., should adhere to the requirements outlined herein.

Anyone who is over age two and able to medically tolerate a face-covering must cover their nose and mouth with a mask or cloth face-covering when in a public per [Interim Guidance on Executive Orders 202.17 and 202.18 Requiring Face Coverings in Public During the COVID-19 Outbreak, April 17, 2020](#). Employers must also provide essential workers with masks free of charge to wear when interacting with the public per [Interim Guidance on Executive Order 202.16 Requiring Face Coverings for Public and Private Employees Interacting with the Public During the COVID-19 Outbreak, April 14, 2020](#).

Pre-Shipping/Storage:

Foods that are ordered and held prior to shipping or delivery must be maintained in a sanitary manner and according to manufacturer's requirements. Shelf stable items may be stored at ambient temperatures. Refrigerated and frozen items must be held at 41°F or less or to maintain product in a frozen state. Storage and handling must be done to avoid contamination from environmental sources and ideally stored in a stock room or room dedicated to holding customer orders. If using a contracted delivery service/company, ensure products are stored appropriately prior to being picked up.

Temperature Control while in Transit:

All foods that require refrigeration must be maintained at a temperature of 41°F or less and frozen items must be handled in a way that they remain solidly frozen. The most effective way to do this is to use insulated shipping containers or coolers specifically made for cold storage and include appropriate cooling medium. Ice packs will help ensure that the proper temperature is maintained throughout the delivery process. If hot foods are delivered, food temperatures during delivery must be maintained at 135°F or above using insulated containers designed to maintain hot food temperatures.

Temperature Control for Ecommerce Deliveries:

Shipping through the mail/internet or common carrier may require the use of specially designed boxes that cannot be easily damaged and will ensure proper temperatures, during transit. To verify that the shipping containers used will maintain required temperatures throughout transit, request copies of validation studies from the container supplier. Also, consider using a color changing time/temperature indicator or time/temperature tracker which will give a visual indication or alert to the shipper that the container has exceeded the required temperature. Use the following stickers on the outside of containers holding perishable or frozen foods: "Keep Refrigerated" or "Keep Frozen".



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Sanitary Transport:

Containers used for the delivery of food ~~to~~ should be dedicated for this use and must be clean and maintained in a sanitary manner so as not to adulterate or contaminate foods. Vehicles should not be used for other purposes when in use as a food delivery purpose. Non-food items such as chemicals, tools or spare tires must be stored away from food in delivery vehicles. Delivery routes should be planned to make the best use of travel to avoid extended delivery times which can affect temperature of products, even in coolers.



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Provide information in the form of a pamphlet, email or sticker to remind the customer of proper food safe food handling practices: [clean, separate, cook, chill.](#)

Separation:

Raw foods, such as meats, eggs or fish must be packaged and shipped in a way that does not contaminate other foods, especially fresh foods that will be eaten without further cooking. Separate bags, boxes and/or coolers is the most effective way to meet this requirement. Never place raw or “to be cooked” foods on top of “ready to eat” foods, regardless of packaging.

Delivery:

Arrange for deliveries when customers are home to receive the product. Avoid leaving foods unattended on doorsteps where they may be temperature abused or otherwise tampered with by pests, pets or others. Ideally, for local delivery, schedule a time for delivery that is agreeable to both the vendor and the customer. For shipped deliveries, identify an expected delivery time and date so the customer can make arrangements to receive the product.