

Drive-Through Grocery Sales & Distribution Site Model

In the very near future, American families will be receiving stimulus checks in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of these families are now a regular paycheck, so it's almost a certainty that thousands---if not millions---will immediately surge to grocery stores to buy necessities. At a point when grocery stores are compelled to limit shopper access because of health concerns, the day when the stimulus checks arrive will likely see a hyper-charged "Black Friday" event which will likely overwhelm the capacity of most stores.

Community leaders should coordinate with store operators to make grocery shopping operate as smoothly as possible. This plan describes a standard plan for a drive-through sales/distribution site for grocery stores. This model allows individuals and families to make choices, pay, and receive groceries quickly and with minimal physical contact. Community leaders: Feel free to use or adapt it, but please have a plan ready for your own community, preferably standardized amongst your various grocery outlets.

- 1) For sake of simplicity, the distribution site should stock and manage a limited inventory of non-perishable dry goods (rice, beans, bulk cereals, flour, baby formula, bread, pasta, dog food, etc.), canned goods, dairy, household products (paper towels, soap, bleach) and other products. Ideally, canned goods should be made available in case or split-case lots instead of single cans.
- 2) This model does not preclude regular shopping. Consumers who desire a greater variety of choices can park in a separate area and shop inside the store.
- 3) This site would be set up in a store parking lot. If the store allows simultaneous interior shopping, the parking area should be offset so that shoppers and vehicles don't have to cross the distribution lanes.
- 4) The diagram depicts a sample layout which can be adapted to local conditions. The site would consist of multiple lanes, to include at least one variety lane (which allows consumers to make choices from a limited array of items), a WIC lane (stocked with WIC-authorized commodities) and a standard package lane where individuals can quickly purchase and load pre-assembled standardized packages (broken out in one-person, two-person, three-person and four-person units).
- 5) The process is set up so that consumers can drive through, make choices, pay, have the groceries loaded in their vehicle and then leave without ever exiting their vehicle. The exception is the standard package lane, in which the consumer will purchase a standard package (which is loaded on a pallet or in boxes) and then pull into a pick-up area where they load the component items.
- 6) All store personnel should wear masks and gloves while handling commodities. Individuals should receive instructions on how to safely unload and disinfect items before bringing them into their homes.
- 7) Ideally, all transactions should use electronic funds transfers. If possible, a smartphone-based "scan and go" system (perhaps adapted from Walmart's) should be integrated into the process. As consumers pull into the initial holding area, large signs explain the process and choices (different lanes, specific food items, etc.) available. They should have their choices made before they depart the holding area and pull into a lane.
- 8) Multiple cashiers should be available for each lane. Ideally, if a "scan and go" system is integrated, the consumer can scan large bar codes for item choices from a display board next to the lane. The cashier prints out an item list, which is placed under the consumer's windshield wiper. After paying electronically, the consumer slowly drives through the lane where loading station handlers refer to the item list and load the chosen items into the trunk, pickup bed or back seat.
- 9) There must be plenty of buffer room between individual loading stations.

10) To preclude hoarding, local officials might place restrictions on the per-visit total transaction amount, or place limitations on specific items.



If you don't choose to use this model, FEMA has references for their standard PODs (points of distribution) which are used to distribute commodities like MREs, ice and bottled water in a disaster or major emergency. These POD layouts may be adapted for grocery distribution. References:

https://training.fema.gov/emiweb/is/is26/facilitator%20manual_is26_weathers.pdf

https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1567005162420-6a397b542cf5a7678781414cfa4e3661/FEMA_Distribution_Management_Plan_Guide_EMPG_FY2019.pdf

https://training.fema.gov/emiweb/is/is26/pod_transcript.pdf

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Mike Jenne mjenne@jcsi-maps.com

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