



**Tennessee**  
*Pledge*

# Reopening Tennessee Responsibly

The “Tennessee Pledge” is a plan to help Tennesseans return to work in a safe environment, restore their livelihoods and reboot our state’s economy.

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# Tennessee Pledge

The “Tennessee Pledge” – is a plan to help Tennesseans return to work in a safe environment, restore their livelihoods and reboot our state’s economy.

COVID-19 is an unprecedented and rapidly evolving threat facing Tennessee and the world. The health and safety of Tennesseans remains our number one priority. Much of our state’s current success in this fight is because Tennesseans naturally choose to put each other first and voluntarily adopt safe, new habits. It’s that volunteer spirit that’s been fighting this pandemic and it’s the same volunteer spirit that will rebuild our economy.

This plan was developed by Governor Lee, the Unified Command Group (UCG) and Tennessee’s Economic Recovery Group (ERG) with input from health experts, state and local partners and business and industry leaders. It includes specific recommendations which enable most businesses to re-open responsibly without the burden of heavy mandates. This will be a gradual process, with room to adjust as we evaluate changing data.

The Tennessee Pledge asks businesses to provide safe working conditions that protect their employees’ health and also protects consumers while securing their livelihoods. This plan also asks employees to commit to protecting themselves, their co-workers and the customers they serve. Finally, we encourage every Tennessee resident to be on the same team with our businesses: act responsibly by following recommended guidelines for social distancing, hygiene and wearing protective equipment when appropriate.

Only by working together as a community of volunteers can we successfully reboot our economy, a vital component of our lives, security and liberty, and successfully move past this public health crisis.

## Our Health

Tennessee's first case of COVID-19 was reported on March 4, 2020. Over the subsequent weeks, case numbers increased rapidly. On April 2 Governor Lee signed his Safer at Home order to implement statewide restrictions on non-essential business and travel in order to "flatten the curve" and quickly slow the spread of disease. This order gave Tennessee and its healthcare system enough time to increase testing, plan for additional healthcare facility capacity, and secure enough personal protective equipment (PPE) to protect our healthcare workers.

In the weeks since the Safer at Home order, Tennessee has made impressive progress on slowing the spread of disease and improving Tennessee's readiness.

- **Disease monitoring:** The curve of illness is flattening. Syndromic data monitoring of influenza-like illness has seen a steady decline since mid-March and syndromic data monitoring of COVID-19-like illness has seen a steady decline since the end of March. The daily growth rate of new cases reported has been stable for more than 14 days.
- **Increase in testing:** Tennessee has dramatically increased testing capacity, with rapid deployment of large volume and rapid testing when cases are identified in high-risk populations. Testing is available throughout the state, and residents have access to testing via health care providers, local health departments, and drive thru stations in every part of the state. Additional for expanded symptomatology has also been implemented to better ascertain the true volume of disease. There has been a downward trajectory of positive tests as a percentage of total tests since April 1.
- **Increase in health care capacity:** Careful monitoring of hospital bed usage shows capacity to treat COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 patients. The Unified Command Group has been working with hospitals, providers, and regional planning groups to increase the capacity of current facilities to "surge" if and when it is needed and to plan for additional clinical alternative care sites if needed.
- **Increase in PPE available:** LaunchTN, Tennessee's own innovation body, has been working closely with businesses across Tennessee and beyond to identify possible sources of masks, gloves, and other forms of PPE. The UCG has streamlined requests for PPE through regional emergency management coordinators and TEMA. To date, millions of dollars have been dedicated to the purchase of PPE to supplement routine supply channels for health care workers and first responders.

## Our Economy

As the direct threat to Tennesseans' health has been mitigated, the threat to their livelihoods has increased. We know that economic health promotes physical and mental well-being. A substantial body of research from the U.S. and abroad consistently demonstrates a strong association between unemployment and poorer health outcomes.<sup>1</sup> Tennesseans have experienced devastating job losses across all 95 counties and diverse industry sectors.

# 413K

**TN Unemployment  
Claims**

As a result of COVID-19 mitigation Tennesseans filed 412,895 unemployment claims with the Department of Labor and Workforce development between March 1 and April 18, 2020.<sup>2</sup>

# 15%

**TN Workers Filed  
Unemployment**

While these challenges started first for many of the Tennesseans who work in entertainment, recreation, and accommodation, they have now spread to impact almost every industry and every county across Tennessee.<sup>3</sup>

# \$870M

**Net Sales Lost by  
TN Retailers in March**

Some industries were impacted more dramatically than others including: a \$408 million decline in restaurant sales, a \$177 million decline in hotel and accommodation sales, a \$218 million decline in motor vehicle related sales, and a \$64 million decline in entertainment and recreation sales year over year. April losses will be significantly greater.<sup>4</sup>

# 53%

**Fewer New Business  
Applications**

New business applications are down 53% in April 2020. Additionally, the number of licensed professionals and businesses declined by 13% compared to the same time last year.<sup>5</sup>

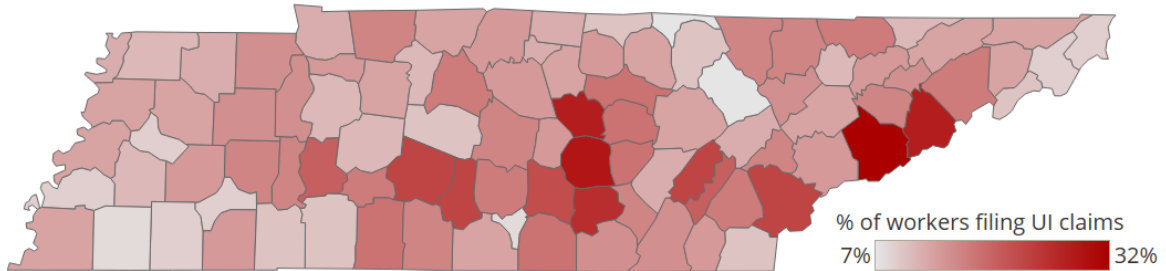
# \$5B

**TN GDP Lost in 2020**

Tennessee Gross Domestic Product is projected to decline \$5 billion during 2020 as a result of closures and joblessness related to the pandemic, assuming businesses begin to reopen on May 1, 2020.<sup>6</sup>

## Share of Jobs Impacted by Tennessee County

Unemployment claims as a share (%) of total county employment

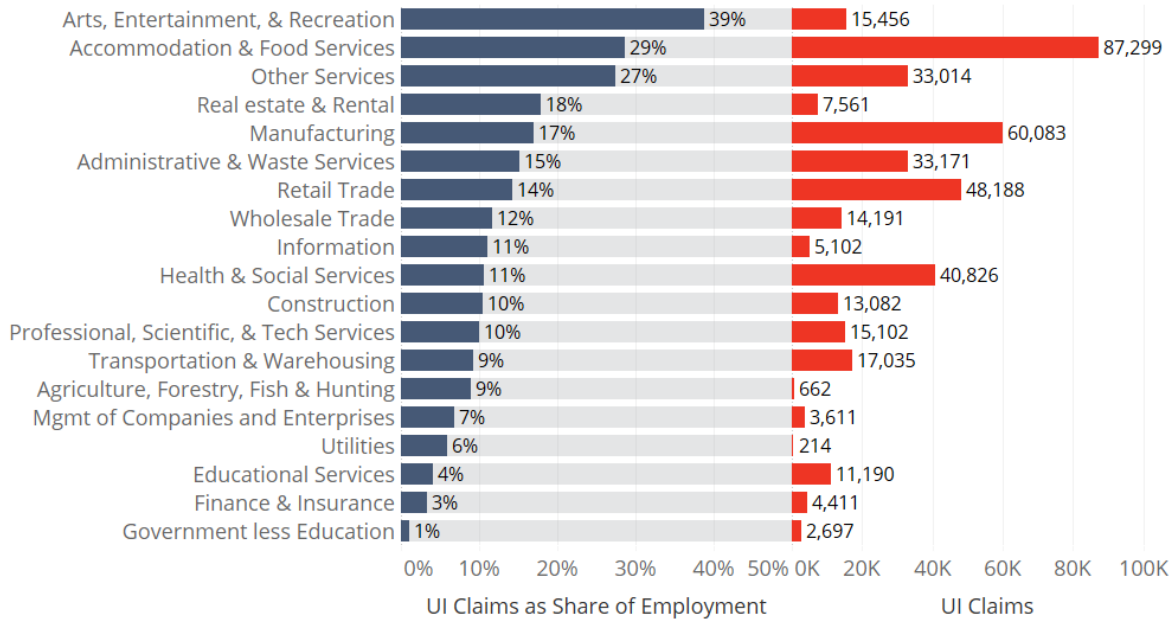


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Source: Tennessee Department of Labor & Workforce Development, Initial Unemployment Insurance Claims (3/1/20 - 4/18/20) and Industry Employment (February 2020). Data reported by claim date.

## Share of Tennessee Jobs Impacted by Sector

Unemployment Insurance (UI) claims as a share (%) of total sector employment



Source: Tennessee Department of Labor & Workforce Development, Initial Unemployment Insurance Claims (3/1/20 - 4/18/20) and Industry Employment (March 2020). Data reported by week ending.

## Unemployment Claims over Time

Weekly total and cumulative total unemployment claims



Source: United States Department of Labor, Weekly Unemployment Insurance Claims (1/4/20-4/18/20). Data reported by week ending.

## Sources

- <sup>1</sup>Hergenrath, K. C., Zeglin, R. J., McGuire-Kuletz, M., & Rhodes, S. D. (2015). Employment as a Social Determinant of Health: A Systematic Review of Longitudinal Studies Exploring the Relationship Between Employment Status and Physical Health. *Rehabilitation Research, Policy, and Education*, 29(1), 2–26.
- <sup>2</sup>Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development.
- <sup>3</sup>Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development.
- <sup>4</sup>Tennessee Department of Revenue. Sales and Use tax estimates do not reflect activities in the personal services sector, and other sectors that are not subject to the tax. Any inferences from these estimates should consider those sectors not represented.
- <sup>5</sup>Tennessee Department of Commerce & Insurance. Preliminary data compares applications between April 1 and April 20 for both 2019 and 2020
- <sup>6</sup>Economic impact analysis prepared by the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce Research Center using REMI dynamic modeling software. Fixed (2012) \$.

# Universal Guidelines

## For All Businesses

The State is recommending safeguarding protocols for all businesses in Tennessee, including those that are re-opening and those essential businesses that have remained open during the Safer at Home order. These safeguarding protocols are based on the recommendations of the CDC and OSHA. To support the Pledge for Tennessee, all employers and employees should take steps to reopen safely, help other industries be able to open more quickly, and help Tennessee remain healthy and open for business.

## Employers

- **Screen all employees reporting to work for COVID-19 symptoms** with the following questions:
  - Have you been in close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19?
  - Are you experiencing a cough, shortness of breath, or sore throat?
  - Have you had a fever in the last 48 hours?
  - Have you had new loss of taste or smell?
  - Have you had vomiting or diarrhea in the last 24 hours?
- **Temperature screening employees:**
  - Best practice: employers to take temperatures on site with a no-touch thermometer each day upon arrival at work.
  - Minimum: Temperatures can be taken before arriving. Normal temperature should not exceed 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit.
- **Direct any employee who exhibits COVID-19 symptoms** (i.e., answers yes to any of the screening questions or who is running a fever) to leave the premises immediately and seek medical care and/or COVID-19 testing, per CDC guidelines. Employers should maintain the confidentiality of employee health information.
- **Implement workplace cleaning and disinfection** practices, according to [CDC guidelines](#), with regular sanitization of high-touch surfaces at least every two hours
- **Mitigate exposure in the workplace** by implementing social distancing guidelines and modify scheduling
- **Allow employees to work from home as much as possible**
- **Plan for potential COVID-19 cases**, and work with local health department officials when needed (e.g., monitor and trace COVID-19 cases, deep clean facilities)
- **Covered employers and employees should be aware of the provisions of the federal Families First Coronavirus Response Act**, which allows for paid sick leave





or expanded family and medical leave for specified reasons, such as for self-quarantining or seeking a medical diagnosis for COVID-19 symptoms

- **Update the Employee Illness Policy** to include the symptoms of “COVID-19” or create a COVID-19 specific policy. All staff should sign the policy, and the policy should be posted for confirmation
- **Limit self-service options** (customer samples, communal packaging, food/beverages, etc.)
- **Post extensive signage on health policies**, including the following documents in the workplace to help educate building occupants on COVID-19 best practices:
  - [CDC guidance to stop the spread of germs](#)
  - [CDC guidance on COVID-19 symptoms](#)

## Employees

- **Stay home when feeling ill**, when exposed to COVID-19 (e.g., positive household member case), or if diagnosed with a confirmed case of COVID-19. Employees who are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 according to the CDC (e.g., due to age or underlying conditions) are encouraged to stay home
- **Increase hygiene practices**—wash hands more frequently, avoid touching face, practice good respiratory etiquette
- **Wear a cloth face covering (not an N-95 or medical mask, which should be reserved for healthcare workers)** while at work and in public to help protect against the spread of the virus
- **Practice recommended social distancing** to the greatest extent possible - **“Further is safer”**
- **Abide by guidelines established by employer**, which may include the use of gloves, social distancing practices in the workplace, and increased sanitation

Businesses should follow guidance issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as well as any applicable federal or regulatory requirements. In addition to these general guidelines for all Tennessee employers and employees, each employer and employee should refer to their industry-specific guidance, as set forth on the following pages. These industry-specific safeguarding protocols have been created with the input of private sector working groups in partnership with the Economic Recovery Group. Protocols are subject to change and may be released on a rolling basis. Companies doing business in Tennessee should follow Tennessee guidance and best practices outlined in this document.

# Restaurant Industry

## Safeguarding Guidance

In addition to strict adherence to CDC guidelines, the State recommends restaurants put into place an assortment of measures to protect consumers and employees, including:

## Employee Protection

- Follow sanitation frequency guidance contained in this document at all times
- Have dedicated face coverings and dedicated gloves (i.e., only used by one person) worn by all employees, at all times
  - Should not be N-95 or medical variety – these should be saved for use by healthcare workers
- Require all employees to report any symptoms of illness to supervisor and require notification of COVID-19 positive case in employee's household
- Provide ServSafe COVID-19 training for all food handlers as soon as possible

## Consumer Protection

- Limit the number of customers in the restaurant to 50% of seating capacity
- Tables should be spaced at least 6 feet apart
- Limit tables to no more than 6 guests per table
- Mark any indoor or outdoor waiting area so that social distancing standards are met (options can include a text system to alert guests of available seating, an intercom system, or only one member of a party being allowed to wait in the waiting area)
- Bar areas should remain closed
- Live music should not be permitted
- Screen customers for illness upon their entry into the restaurant:
  - Best practice: Temperature checks for every customer. Customers with temperatures above 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit should not be permitted on premise
  - Minimum: Question customers regarding COVID-19 symptoms
    - Have you been in close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19?
    - Are you experiencing a cough, shortness of breath, or sore throat?
    - Have you had a fever in the last 48 hours?

## Business Process Adaptations

- Place hand sanitizer stations in restaurant lobby and bathrooms, as well as at cashier stations
- Sanitize all front-of-house contact surfaces including door handles, screens, phones, pens, keyboards and other areas of hand contact every two hours, at a minimum
- Use menus that are disposable or sanitized between each use
- Use rolled silverware/napkins stored in sealed bins (gloves should be used by staff while rolling silverware in designated sanitary areas)
- Sanitize all tabletop items, including condiments, after each table turns (or use disposables)
- Sanitize chairs, especially where contact occurs, after each table turns
- Do not offer self-serve buffets, condiments on a counter for use by multiple tables, or beverage station re-use

# Retail Industry

## Safeguarding Guidance

In addition to strict adherence to CDC guidelines, the State recommends retail industries put into place an assortment of measures to protect consumers and employees, including:

### Employee Protection

- Staff should wear face coverings (not N-95 or medical masks, which should be reserved for healthcare workers) and other personal protection items as recommended by the CDC
- Provide training on personal protective equipment based on CDC guidelines
- Provide a sanitizing station such as a wash basin with soap and/or bottle of hand sanitizer
- Stagger shifts, breaks, and meals, in compliance with wage and hour laws and regulations, to maintain social distancing
- Provide regular updates and training for employees about personal COVID-19 mitigation and store safeguards based on CDC guidelines
- Require all employees to report any illness to supervisor and require notification of COVID-19 positive case in employee's household
- Prohibit congregating in break rooms or common areas and limit capacity of such areas to allow for safe social distancing minimum of 6 feet whenever possible

### Consumer Protection

- Limit the number of customers inside a store at a given time, excluding employees and representatives of third-party delivery companies, to 50 percent or less of store occupancy based on Tennessee's Building and Fire Code
- Customers should wear face coverings inside the store
- Consider dedicated shopping hours or appointment times for the elderly, medically vulnerable, and health care workers
- Establish one-way aisles and traffic patterns for social distancing
- Increase curbside, pickup, and delivery service options to minimize contact and maintain social distancing
- Assign dedicated staff to prompt customers regarding the importance of social distancing

- Add social distancing “reminder” signs, personal stickers, floor decals, and audio announcements

## **Business Process Adaptations**

- Establish enhanced cleaning protocols that follow CDC guidelines including sanitizing shared resources (such as carts) after each use, and sanitizing all high traffic / high touch areas (such as counters check-out lanes, keypads, break rooms, dressing rooms, rest rooms) every two hours and when visibly dirty
- Use a clearly designated entrance and a separate clearly designated exit to maintain social distancing
- Use plastic shields or barriers between customers and clerks at service counters, and clean them frequently (every 2 hours and when visibly dirty)
- Adjust store hours to allow time for enhanced cleaning
- Prohibit the use of reusable bags (reusable bags may carry COVID-19)
- Suspend the sampling of food and personal hygiene products
- Task management-level employees within a store to monitor compliance