

## **Report: Utah Homebuilders' COVID-19 Protocols**

March 24, 2020

Utah homebuilders are following the guidance of the CDC and other local and national officials in their attempts to limit the spread of the COVID-19 virus and to mitigate its negative economic effects. After consulting with various homebuilders with operations in the Salt Lake and Utah Valleys, a broadly consistent set of current protocols emerged. These practices can be grouped into the following categories: General CDC Safety Guidelines; Customer, Trade and Employee Interactions; Model Home, Design Center and Warranty Interactions; Screening & Awareness; Social Distancing; Cleaning & Sanitation; and Employee Supports.

### **General CDC Safety Guidelines**

These practices aim to safeguard the general safety and well being of the public. Some specific methods include:

- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
- Practice social distancing by maintaining personal space of at least 6 feet or more
- Avoid close contact with sick people
- No handshaking or greeting hugs
- Avoid events or meetings with groups over ten people
- Stay at home if you feel sick
- Regularly sanitize workspace and frequently touched surfaces
- If you are over 60 or have underlying health conditions stay at home and away from other people who are sick

### **Customer, Trade and Employee Interactions**

These practices aim to give builders direction on options in handling customer, trade, and employee interactions.

- Follow all CDC recommended safety guidelines when working with customers, trade partners, fellow company employees, etc.
- Discuss and plan protocols for specific interactions (model homes, design centers, warranty visits, trade meetings, employee meetings, etc.)

### **Model Home, Design Center and Warranty Interactions**

These practices aim to give builders direction on options in handling model homes, design centers, and warranty interactions.

- **Model Homes may choose to remain open when:**
  - o Follow all CDC safety guidelines
  - o A verbal greeting is given explaining to model home visitors that strict social distancing protocols are in place
  - o Ask appropriate screening questions upon arrival such as if a visitor has recently traveled or had any symptoms of illness

- o Require potential buyers to wash their hands or to use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer immediately upon entry
  - o Appropriate signage at the entrance explaining that strict social distancing protocols are in place
  - o Take extra precautions to remain 6 feet apart at all times
  - o Limit occupancy of no more than ten people in a model at a time
- **Model Home alternative options:**
    - o Model Home visits by appointment only
    - o Making virtual, video and 3D tours of model available for online viewing
    - o Utilizing live streaming, facetime or other technology to walk potential buyers through models and inventory homes without having customers and agents be physically together
    - o Displaying onsite signage to encourage buyers to use online viewing options and schedule virtual appointments
- **Design Center appointments:**
    - o Follow all CDC safety guidelines
    - o Screening call made and appropriate screening questions asked before the appointment
    - o Limit number of attendees to only those who are on the purchase agreement
    - o No-touch policy on samples in the design center
    - o Option to meet virtually
- **Warranty appointments:**
    - o Follow all CDC guidelines
    - o Consider delay of warranty work that is not an emergency (flood, leaking roof, etc.) or is cosmetic
    - o Screening call made and appropriate screening questions asked before any appointment by company warranty tech or trade contractor
    - o Educate trade contractors who may be doing warranty work of the CDC safety guidelines
    - o Ask trade contractors appropriate screening questions before scheduling them for warranty work
    - o Wash and sanitize hands before entering any home
    - o Provide homeowners with other alternatives which may include postponement of warranty request or virtual appointment option
    - o Consider an extension of builder warranty timelines to accommodate postponed appointments that may exceed original warranty timeframe

### **Screening & Awareness**

These practices aim to prevent customers who may be infected with COVID-19 from coming into any indirect or direct contact with other customers or employees. They will ensure that all customers and employees maintain safe habits. Some specific practices include:

- Allowing customers to meet with sales representatives by appointment only or a private showing
- Prominently posting signs at the entrance of all facilities containing information about the company's response to the pandemic and asking customers to take extra precautions

- Asking all customers if they have recently traveled or had any symptoms of illness; this can be done over the phone when scheduling appointments, at the front door, or on a posted sign. Customers who have either traveled or who have symptoms are respectfully asked not to enter

### **Social Distancing**

These practices aim to minimize all daily physical interactions. Some specific methods include:

- Abstaining from handshakes or other physical interactions. This policy is often acknowledged either by a sales representative or in a posted sign to ensure understanding by customers
- Remaining 6-8 feet apart when in conversation
- Encouraging online or phone interactions for any discussions that do not need to be in person. Possibly asking customers who are not looking to buy in the near-term to consider postponing their visits until after the crisis has calmed
- Limiting the number of people who can be in a space to ten at a given time. For example, if there are already several people in the sales office, a representative may ask the next family to wait in the car until he or she is ready. Sales representatives may also consider more effective ways to use their space (e.g., placing agents in separate buildings to accommodate more people)

### **Cleaning & Sanitation**

These practices aim to maintain a safe and clean working environment. Some specific methods include:

- Increasing the frequency with which cleaners come to clean model homes, sales centers, design centers, finished inventory homes, and corporate offices
- Providing hand sanitizer for customers and employees
- A daily schedule for regular cleaning of commonly touched surfaces and providing disinfectant wipes to do so
- Employees should wipe down door handles and surfaces with disinfectant wipes as guests leave

### **Employee Supports**

These practices aim to give employees the support and flexibility to carry out their jobs safely. Some specific methods include:

- Encourage employees who feel ill to stay home
- Encourage employees who may have been exposed to anyone that has been diagnosed with COVID-19 to work from home
- Giving symptomatic employees additional sick days to reduce incentives to come in when sick
- Providing all necessary supplies and clear guidelines for correct mitigation strategies
- Allowing (or requiring) employees to work from home whenever possible and providing the necessary technology for them to continue doing their jobs
- Frequently communicate with supervisor to address any changing needs or circumstances
- Consider making accommodations for special needs and situations (caretakers of the elderly, immune-compromised family members, daycare constraints with children who are now being home-schooled)
- Encourage employees who have recently traveled to self-quarantine for an appropriate amount of time