



"THE VOICE OF COOPERATIVES"

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ALTERNATIVE OPERATING PRACTICES OF COOPERATIVES

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(What follows are some ideas that have been shared with TACC staff from other cooperative leaders across Texas regarding health concerns in their operations. If this paper does not contain some successful practices you are implementing, please share with us so that others can gain from your experience.)

- _ 1. One co-op took a look at their customers buying habits from this time in 2019 & subsequently made early purchases in 2020 to ensure that the same amount would be available at the co-op six months in advance.
- _ 2. To calm workforce fears & to bring stability to their lives, some co-op managers are holding frequent employee meetings each week with all employees & allowing them to ask their questions or else they are communicating with all of them by email frequently.
- _ 3. Another co-op general manager makes it a point that when communications are shared with employees, that same information is also shared with the board of directors.
- _ 4. Given the potential economic slowdown, only one co-op manager has raised the issue of accounts receivables issues that could be on the horizon. They also said while we need to be sympathetic, it is their fiduciary duty to uphold the co-op's credit policy to ensure the financial success of the organization.
- _ 5. Most all co-ops we have heard from have eliminated the customer coffee pot & its service area in the name of member and employee safety.
- _ 6. One of the biggest concerns of co-op leaders is finding methods to keep employee & customer calmness during this most unfortunate time. In short, although most everyone is a proud person, some are and some are not showing their fear of the situation and thus are looking to the general manager for reassurance, direction, stability & a sense of hope. It is incumbent on general managers to be strong and out in front of this at all times.
- _ 7. One co-op has devoted one full time employee to do nothing but sanitize, then sanitize again, & then once again; especially in high traffic areas. Some are sanitizing hourly --- even gas pump nozzles, air hoses, door knobs, countertops & etc.
- _ 8. All co-ops seem to be open for business, but some are only providing curbside pickup and thus not allowing customers into their stores. Others are allowing a customer inside when absolutely necessary.
- _ 9. Some co-ops are opening up 30 minutes later and closing 30 minutes earlier to accommodate employee needs.
- _ 10. All co-ops are practicing social distancing.
- _ 11. To lessen the potential spread of the virus, one co-op has gone paperless on their customer purchases.
- _ 12. Given the outpouring of compassion for one another during these uncertain times, in one co-op, the term "employee sympathy sickness" has been coined & implemented.
- _ 13. Even with the Department of Homeland Security and the Office of the State Chemist declaring agriculture as an "essential business", some co-op managers are, in addition, doing their part to get their county judge to declare agriculture as an "essential business" as well, thereby allowing them to remain open during this most pressing planting season time.

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__ 14. During this time of year for some communities, many county fairs were to be held. However, they have been cancelled. In light of this, some general managers are looking for ways to counter the floor price that is being paid to the kids raising these "show animals". If you have a suggestion, please submit it to us for sharing.

One co-op has decided to give **ALL sale animal entries** an "add on" to the floor priced received, with seniors in high school receiving slightly more than the rest of the students.

__ 15. In the name of minimizing spread of the virus, several co-ops are not allowing mixing or sharing of employees from one department to another within the company.

__ 16. Several governmental agencies have declared agriculture an "essential business", but to reinforce this statement, some co-op managers have handed ALL of their employees a stapled copy of papers to use should they get stopped by law enforcement authorities during a "shelter in place" declaration. Those stapled copies consist of: a) the Department of Homeland Security order declaring agriculture as an essential business, b) the Office of the State Chemist order declaring agriculture as an essential business and c) a one - page paper signed both by the employee AND the general manager as authorization that the employee does indeed work at the co-op.

__ 17. Some co-ops are allowing a portion of their employees to work from home.

__ 18. One co-op manager sits on the local emergency planning committee (which is chaired by the county judge) & this gives him a leg up on access of unforeseen actions about to take place by law enforcement authorities.

__ 19. Most all co-ops appear to be providing employee training on the guidelines issued by the Department of Homeland Security.

__ 20. Co-ops are requiring any employee coming in contact with anyone testing positive, to notify management so that appropriate action can be taken.

__ 21. Some co-ops are requiring temperatures to be taken of all employees daily & those customers that tend to "congregate". Anyone with 100.4 or higher are asked to go home.

__ 22. Some are creating a "return policy" in their stores that discourages customers from panic buying.