



COVID-19 Comprehensive Crisis Communications Guide

The following guidelines are recommended for proactively addressing communications in the event of a crisis related to COVID-19 exposure in a local franchise work environment. These guidelines are for general high-level activity, but individual situations should also be addressed on a case-by-case basis with any additional details that might apply to a local scenario and local counsel is highly recommended.

QUICK CHECKLIST



- ☐ Update your employees' contact information and emergency contact details in your phone.
- ☐ Follow the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) [guidelines](#) for businesses.
- ☐ Review and adhere to CDC and local health department guidelines.
- ☐ Notify Neighborly corporate via your Franchise Business Coach and Director of Communication and PR Kimberly Denman (Kimberly.denman@nbly.com).

Infected Franchise Owner, Employee and/or Service Professional

First and foremost, follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines for employer strategies designed to prevent the spread of COVID-19 among your staff and the communities you serve. You should also seek independent local counsel for guidance on specific jurisdictional guidelines and requirements.

The guidelines are available here:

- [Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#)
- [U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Safety and Health Administration COVID-19 Standards](#)
- [CDC's Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#)
- [Stop the Spread of Germs](#)
- [Symptoms of Coronavirus Disease](#)

Upon being notified that a member of your team or you have been diagnosed with COVID-19 by a health care professional, immediately notify Neighborly corporate via your Franchise Business Coach and Director of Communication and PR Kimberly Denman (Kimberly.denman@nbly.com). The Neighborly corporate team is there to support you through this crisis and prepare a crisis response plan for you.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION (with your team)

QUICK CHECKLIST



- ☐ Stop the spread of misinformation by communicating clearly with your team as soon as possible.
- ☐ Take steps to keep employees calm and stress levels low.
- ☐ Monitor your team for [symptoms](#) and take [precautions](#).
- ☐ Respect self-isolation guidelines and check in with your self-isolated employees.
- ☐ Deep clean and sanitize the office, vehicles and equipment if exposed.

If the individual has been in contact with other team members, follow these guidelines for appropriate communication to all relevant audiences:

With the infected individual:

- Encourage the individual to see and/or speak with their local health department for guidance and treatment.
- Require that the individual not return to work until cleared to return to work by a health care professional.
- Ask the individual who he or she has been in close contact with at work during the last two weeks. (The CDC defines “close contact” as “a person that has been within six feet of the infected employee for a prolonged period of time.”)

With employees:

- The identity of the quarantined employee should be kept confidential.
- Edit as needed and send the following message to your staff to ensure everyone is aware of the situation so they can take the proper safety measures themselves.

“Hello [INSERT FRANCHISE BRAND AND LOCATION] team,

I regret to inform you that a member of our team tested positive for the coronavirus (COVID-19). We were informed by the [CDC or local public health department] of the diagnosis on [DATE TBD]. Since that date, we have been working closely with local authorities and the employee is currently in quarantine.

The health and safety of everyone on our team and the customers we serve is our top priority. We are in communications with the individual who tested positive to determine everyone they may have been in direct contact with while infected.

(OPTION A, for if you're continuing to operate despite the exposure)

For the time being, we will continue to operate as an essential service provider for our community. Since we cannot control the severity or unpredictability of this virus, it is of the utmost importance that we continue to take preventive measures to limit the spread and

impact of COVID-19. Please rest assured that all areas and equipment this employee potentially came in contact with have been deep cleaned and sanitized for the safety of you and our customers.

It is our duty to act with prudence in our day-to-day operations with preventative safety measures following the guidance set forth by the U.S. Federal Government, Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and other health agencies, including:

- Cleaning hands with soap often, for at least 20 seconds.
- Using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available.
- Keeping a safe distance (minimum of 6 feet) from people.
- Wearing a face mask and gloves when on service calls.
- Teaching employees proper usage and disposal of gloves.
- Cleaning frequently touched surfaces.
- Covering cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throwing the tissue in the trash.
- Staying home when sick.

(OPTION B, for if you decide to shut down as a result of the exposure)

We have decided to temporarily shut down our services to ensure there is no further spread of the virus to our team or the customers we serve. We intend to resume operations as usual on [DATE TBD]. In the meantime, [ADDRESS HOW COMPENSATION IS BEING HANDLED DURING SHUTDOWN].

If you are concerned about your own health/potential exposure to COVID-19, I urge you to seek testing by reaching out to [LOCAL RESOURCES AND THEIR CONTACT INFO]. If you have questions about this situation, please don't hesitate to contact [YOU AS THE FRANCHISE OWNER, MANAGER TO HANDLE SUCH INTERNAL QUESTIONS, CDC, ETC.]."

EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION (with your customers)

QUICK CHECKLIST



- ☐ Identify customers who may have had contact with infected person.
- ☐ Notify customers who may have had contact with infected person. The CDC will be contacting customers so better if you contact them first.
- ☐ Tell customers to contact the CDC or local health department if they have any questions.
- ☐ Alert existing customers if you are temporarily closing or need to reschedule appointments.

With customers who may have been directly exposed to the infected individual:

- According to the [CDC](#), ***if the infected individual was in direct contact with any customers during the period when they may be infected***, it is the franchise owner's responsibility to directly contact those customers to notify them of the recent diagnosis. Neighborly recommends calling

the customers individually, abiding by the following script to notify them of the potential exposure:

“Good afternoon, [CUSTOMER NAME],

[FRANCHISE BRAND] of [CITY, STATE], a Neighborly company, was notified by the [Centers for Disease Control (CDC) or name of the local public health agency] on [date TBA], 2020, that an employee who recently performed work in your home has tested positive for the coronavirus (COVID-19). We are working closely with local authorities and the employee is currently in quarantine. The health and safety of our customers is our top priority, so we are personally contacting you and all customers who may possibly have had contact with this employee. We will continue to closely monitor this situation surrounding COVID-19 and will follow all guidelines from local officials about the operation of our business. We thank you for being a loyal customer and promise to keep you posted with any updates as necessary.”

- **IF the customer says they are feeling sick**, give them the contact information for the local CDC or local health department and direct them to contact them.
- **IF the customer has further questions about what to do**, direct them to contact the local CDC or local health department and provide the necessary contact information.

If you decide to halt operations/temporarily close due to the exposure, regardless of who did/did not come in contact with the infected:

“[FRANCHISE BRAND] of [CITY, STATE], a Neighborly company, puts the health and safety of our customers as our top priority. Due to the coronavirus (COVID19), we wanted to inform you that we have decided to suspend operations as of [date TBD] to lower the risk of COVID-19 exposure to our customers and employees. We will resume operations as soon as possible.

We appreciate your desire to have [SUMMARIZE SERVICE OFFERED], and we apologize that we are unable to provide the service at this time. As of right now, we plan to resume normal business hours on [DATE TBD] and will be in touch then to reschedule your service.

We thank you for being a loyal customer. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to us.”

LOCAL NEWS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

QUICK CHECKLIST



- ☐ Do not reach out to local media, but if you are contacted by the media, follow this checklist.
- ☐ Notify Neighborly Director of Communication and PR Kimberly Denman (Kimberly.denman@nbly.com) if contacted by the media.

- ☐ Never disclose information about the person infected.
- ☐ Identify one person to be the spokesperson for media.
- ☐ Become familiar with the approved responses.
- ☐ Review [crisis communication best practices](#) and work with Neighborly Communications team for interview coaching as needed.

News Media Best Practices

- **Do not** proactively contact the media about the infected individual or your response to the crisis. Should the media contact you or anyone on your team directly with inquiries about the infected individual, follow these best practices.
- **Use a single spokesperson** – A single spokesperson should be designated to speak for the local franchise during a crisis. (This spokesperson is only for the individual location and should not speak for the corporate brand as a whole.) The spokesperson does not necessarily have to be the franchise owner. If an employee who is not the designated spokesperson is contacted by the media, they should respond with the following statement:

“I am not the appropriate person to speak to, but I can connect you to [SPOKESPERSON TITLE, FIRST AND LAST NAME] at [EMAIL] or [PHONE NUMBER].”

- **Stick to the approved verbiage** – If the designated spokesperson receives a direct media inquiry, he/she should provide the following, corporate-approved holding statement:

“[FRANCHISE BRAND] of [CITY, STATE], a Neighborly company, was notified by the [Centers for Disease Control (CDC) or name of the local public health agency] on [date TBA], 2020, about an employee who tested positive for the coronavirus (COVID-19). We are working closely with local authorities and the employee is currently in quarantine. The health and safety of our customers and employees is our top priority during this time, so we are personally contacting all customers and employees who may possibly have had contact with the affected individual. We will continue to closely monitor this situation surrounding COVID-19 and will follow all guidelines from local officials about the operation of our business.

(OPTION A, for if you’re continuing to operate despite the exposure) While we will continue to operate as an essential service provider for our community, we are continuing to take preventive measures to limit the spread and impact of COVID-19, including taking the recommended steps to deep clean and sanitize all areas and equipment this employee potentially came in contact with have been deep cleaned and sanitized for the safety of you and our customers. All employees that potentially came in contact with the affected individual have been notified, as well.

(OPTION B, for if you decide to shut down as a result of the exposure) Due to the exposure, we have proactively decided to temporarily cease operations, effective [DATE], and currently plan to reopen on [DATE].

While we cannot control the severity or unpredictability of this virus, we have been and will continue to take preventive measures to limit the spread and impact of COVID-19. We are currently

acting with prudence in our day-to-day operations with preventative safety measures following the guidance set forth by the U.S. Federal Government, Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and other health agencies, including:

- Cleaning hands with soap often, for at least 20 seconds.
- Using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available.
- Keeping a safe distance (minimum of 6 feet) from people.
- Wearing a face mask and gloves when on service calls.
- Teaching employees proper usage and disposal of gloves.
- Cleaning frequently touched surfaces.
- Covering cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throwing the tissue in the trash.
- Staying home when sick.

We also encourage our customers to let us know in advance of an appointment if there are any concerns or they would like us to take special precautions.”

- **If you are contacted and end up providing the approved holding statement to news media, be sure to inform your Franchise Business Coach and the Director of Communications and PR Kimberly Denman (Kimberly.denman@nbly.com).** The Neighborly Communications and PR team can provide interview coaching and track television broadcasts and newspapers for any stories or quotes including your business’ name. If there are any inaccuracies that need to be corrected, proper action should be taken as soon as possible.
- **If a member of the news media calls you on the phone (which will likely be the primary method of contact right now during COVID-19 social distancing),** be sure to note the reporter’s name, the media outlet, their email and phone number. If there is a controversial situation you believe the news media will call about, inform all employees so that the reporter’s calls can be specifically screened.

IMPORTANT: *When you are asked for your opinion about why the event/situation is important or how it should be handled, you should be mindful that your comments may be construed as representing the brand as a whole rather than just yourself or individual franchised business. Extreme caution should be used to maintain the goodwill and value of the brand’s name and reputation.*

Social Media Best Practices

QUICK CHECKLIST



- ☐ Identify the point person on your team for monitoring your business’ social media.
- ☐ Do not post or share information about infected individual on social media channels.
- ☐ Utilize the temporarily closed social statements provided below.
- ☐ Check messages, comments or reviews promptly and respond as needed.
- ☐ Reach out to the corporate team for help with responses as needed.

- **Do not** proactively share anything about the infected individual on social media. If someone does reach out through social media about the COVID-19 exposure, we recommend not responding.

If someone continues to comment on your social page asking about the situation, then you can make the decision to reach out in a private message. We suggest sharing this message:

- Hi [INSERT NAME]. We appreciate you reaching out. Yes, there is an infected individual at our business. We are working closely with local authorities and the individual is currently in quarantine. The health and safety of our customers is our highest priority during this time, so we are personally contacting all customers who may possibly have had contact with the infected individual. We will continue to closely monitor this situation surrounding COVID-19 and will follow all guidelines from local officials about the operation of our business. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact [FRANCHISE OWNER CONTACT INFORMATION]

If your business has shut down, you can share these statements on social media to alert your customers:

- **Longer statement:** Due to the current crisis, we have decided to temporarily shut down our services to ensure there is no further spread of the virus to our team or to the customers we serve. We intend to resume operations as usual on [DATE TBD], and we look forward to serving you when we reopen. If you have questions about this situation, please don't hesitate to contact [YOU AS THE FRANCHISE OWNER, MANAGER TO HANDLE SUCH INTERNAL QUESTIONS, ETC.]."
- **Shorter statement (180 characters limit):** Due to the current crisis, we have decided to temporarily shut down our services to ensure there is no further spread of the virus to our team or the customers we serve. We intend to resume operations as usual on [DATE TBD], and we look forward to serving you when we reopen.

How to Respond to a COVID-Related Questions on Social Media

1. Identify who will be point person for social media for your business. Make sure this person is available and knowledgeable on what to do.
2. Set up notifications for social media so you know right away if someone has messaged, commented, reviewed your business.
3. Monitor your page(s) closely and respond to any message you receive on the day you receive it and as soon as possible.
4. Reach out to your Local Marketing Specialist or Communications Manager if you have a situation you are not sure how to answer.

Your Local Marketing Specialist and Communications Manager for your brand are here to help. View the chart below for your brand contacts.

	Local Marketing Specialist	Communications Manager
Aire Serv	Mary Hromadka (interim)	Jason Lee
Rainbow International	Katie Maze	Jason Lee
Mr. Rooter Plumbing	Haley Anderson	Jason Lee
Mr. Electric	Shelby Volleman	Megan Boyd

Mr. Appliance	Rachel Chaney	Megan Boyd
Five Star Painting/Protect Painters	Cecilia Cleveland	Megan Boyd
Mr. Handyman	Ryan Kerwin	Erin McDermott
Molly Maid	Devin Moore	Erin McDermott
Window Genie	Riley Long	Erin McDermott
The Grounds Guys	Keith Sims	Andrea Gaul
Glass Doctor	Jana Dvorsky	Andrea Gaul
Mosquito Joe	Meredith Flora	Andrea Gaul
Real Property Management	Kent Frogley (VP Marketing)	Kimberly Denman

Being Neighborly Online

It's important to remember that whenever you or any of your employees are responding on Facebook, Twitter, or any other social media platform, your communication will be construed as representing your business, the brand, and Neighborly.

It's also important to remember that your responses online are often not even for the person who wrote the complaint - they're for future customers deciding whether to do business with you.

That said, it's important to speak kindly and professionally online, no matter the circumstances. Your Local Marketing Specialist or Communications Manager can help you craft a reply. In general, refer to these best practices when responding:

- Speak calmly and respectfully, without profanity or sarcasm.
- Respond in a timely fashion. **6 hours or less** is a good rule of thumb.
- Acknowledge the customer as right from his/her own perspective.
 - NOTE: This doesn't mean you should admit to something that isn't true. However, you can always acknowledge the customer's negative experience, and make your best effort to turn it into a positive one.
- Direct the conversation away from public-facing social media when possible.
 - Encourage the customer to send you a private message with more information, reply to your email, call your local office or stop by in person. Keep in mind the level of tension you sense from the customer before you invite them in person to speak with you.
- Recommend other Neighborly brands in your territory when possible. Refer to the Neighborly Resources Page to identify fellow Neighborly brands near you.
- Do not delete any comments on your social pages regarding COVID-19.
- Do not use the words coronavirus, COVID-19, or any other name for the virus on social media. Instead use more generic terms like virus, pandemic, etc.
- If you or your team is serving your community in any way during this crisis, you can share that on social media.
 - EX: Our team delivered 100 masks to front-line workers today to show appreciation for all their hard work. [Include photo if possible]
 - EX: This afternoon we had the opportunity to clean first responders' vehicles. It was an honor to serve these individuals who are working overtime during this crisis. [Include photo if possible]

CORPORATE AND BRAND TALKING POINTS & RESPONSES

- [CLICK HERE](#) to download General and Brand-Specific talking points and scripted responses you can use with the media – both news and social.
- [CLICK HERE](#) for scripted social media responses you can use.