

Feedback from Washington Banks & State Banking Associations

Beginning March 9, the WBA has been hosting twice-weekly calls with our members to share information and discuss what they are doing for their employees and customers concerning the COVID-19 pandemic.

The overlying theme should be that the banking industry should communicate strength and avoid any communications which may incite panic.

Here is the feedback we have received from our members, as well as other state banking associations throughout the U.S., in no particular order:

- Designate times for "at-risk" customers (because of age or condition) to visit the lobby when no others are allowed. Some are calling these "Golden Hours."
- Banks are all making different decisions about closing lobbies and going to drive-thru/ITM/ATM only. Closing lobbies is not the same as closing branches. Some banks are establishing "triggers" for closing lobbies, such as the State's new requirement for the closing of bars and restaurants and having groups of no more than 50.
- Communicate carefully with customers about using the best method of banking for them. Remind them of telebanking/online banking/ITM/ATM. You DO NOT want to instill panic. Communicate by all means possible – text, email, website, social media. Put a posting on the lobby door about any changes – appointments/drive-thru only, to not come in if you are feeling ill, etc.
- The DFI, FDIC, and OCC have asked for notice if a branch is closed.
- If an employee or customer of a branch is exposed or becomes sick, branches affected have closed for cleaning and all employees within the branch are at home for the 14-day quarantine period. Once the branch is fully cleaned and new staff is assigned, the branch will reopen.
- Suspended all non-essential business travel.
- Encouraging employees, where appropriate, to work remotely. Some banks are sending people to work from home and using offices so that people who have to work in the bank are not working in close areas. Some banks are alternating days for work from home between and A and B team. Others are offering employees the ability, when possible, to come in during off-hours such as during evening hours or on the weekends.
- Hold all group meetings via teleconferencing.

- Advise employees to review personal travel carefully. If employees go to an area that is considered a hot spot, they may be asked to self-quarantine for 14 days.
- If employees are sick, they are told to go home.
- Some banks are paying for time off for one or more of the following: illness, necessary child or family care or "high risk" situation. Others are providing additional PTO or sick days to help bridge a gap until the Washington Paid Family Medical Leave Act can kick-in.
- Look at the possibility of consolidating offices and staff that serve nearby areas.
- Remove all beverage/snack stations from lobbies.
- Split teams up between buildings so that your entire mortgage processing department etc., is not exposed at one time.
- Make loans by appointment only.
- Open new accounts by appointment only.
- FDIC is concerned that there might be a run on cash. They suggest that you request the same amount of cash as you would for a holiday weekend. Track large cash withdrawals and contact those customers to explain that the bank is secure.
- Clean the bank thoroughly, especially in high touch areas. Provide bank employees with a sanitizer, gloves, wipes, etc. Use 6-foot distance. Ask customers and employees if they are feeling ill. If customers appear or say they are ill, ask them to leave the bank lobby and use the drive-thru.
- For employees who are handling large amounts of cash, some banks are providing gloves to minimize any possible exposure. Others are using cash already in the vault before using cash that recently came in.
- Use branches or REO as collection points for groceries or meals for kids and the elderly. Allow staff to volunteer to help others.
- If appropriate, establish one branch lobby for business customers only.
- Remind customers of scams, especially emails – latest include "CDC" requiring purchases of all kinds to be made online and asking for credit card info; asking for SSN and bank account number to deposit "lost wage" reimbursement.

- Identify the hospitality and restaurant sector customers and reach out to identify assistance that might be needed. See what can be done.
- Banks have reviewed child care options, some have increased their stipend for employees to help pay for additional child care, or are offering flexible schedules to help with caring for family members.
- DFI and FDIC have agreed to stand by any accommodations that banks take to help customers, so long as it is prudent and reasonable. Do not throw good money after bad-
-i.e. a customer who is defaulting because of bad business decisions rather than Coronavirus.
- ALL FDIC employees are working from home. If you have a question, make sure that you leave a voice mail and follow it up with an email.
- Communicate regularly with your regulators.
- Have your Pandemic Response Team meet regularly to keep up with changes.
- Prepare your bank to operate in a completely virtual world.
- Advise younger employees about the risk to older/high-risk condition people. Explain why social distancing is so important.

If you have other ideas to add to this list, please contact Megan Managan at megan@wabankers.com.