



## **BULLETIN #67/2020 MAY 15, 2020**

### **\_CORONAVIRUS UPDATE #53**

**GOV. BAKER: WORK FROM HOME IF YOU CAN, WEAR A MASK WHEN  
OUT**

**MSADA LETTER TO GOV. BAKER ON RE-OPENING DEALERSHIP  
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*[This bulletin supplements our previous bulletins #11 and #16 through #66 on this subject matter. These bulletins are intended to be cumulative so we can avoid repeating the same information.]*

#### **Gov. Baker: Work From Home If You Can, Wear a Mask When Out**

Two key strategies to maintaining progress in the fight against COVID-19 as the state begins a gradual process of reviving public activity will be use of masks and, wherever possible, employees working remotely, Gov. Charlie Baker said today.

During his daily Coronavirus press conference -- potentially his last State House appearance before Monday, when a panel plans to file a report outlining a roadmap toward phased reopening -- Baker touted both practices and stressed that the public health threat will require an ongoing vigilant response.

About half of the employees in state government's executive branch have been working remotely since late March, and Baker said his administration this week extended that policy "for the foreseeable future."

He praised large employers such as Blue Cross Blue Shield and Raytheon who have collectively permitted about 150,000 workers to fulfill their duties from home, suggesting other fields where remote work is possible should follow their example.

"The new rules for everybody associated with work in an office are going to require people to create distance," Baker said. "One way you create distance and make it work is by not having the same number of people show up in the same office as you did before, to the extent that companies can find ways to make remote work or work from home work, even if it's only a few days a week."

Baker had pushed for expanded telework before the pandemic hit, including language in his transportation bond bill that would have offered a \$2,000-per-worker tax credit to



his transportation bond bill that would have offered a \$2,000-per-worker tax credit to employers who allowed working from home in an attempt to alleviate roadway congestion.

Residents must wear face coverings when they are in public and unable to maintain a safe distance from others under a May 1 [executive order](#). Doing so, Baker said Friday, can reduce the risk of transmission by as much as 80 percent, protecting both the wearer and those around them.

Researchers believe 7 to 10 percent of the state's population has been exposed enough to the novel Coronavirus to develop antibodies, Baker said, though not all of those people experienced severe illness or even symptoms.

The governor said anywhere from one-fifth to one-half of those infected with the highly infectious virus never display symptoms, despite being able to pass it to others.

"If such a significant portion of the population that gets this virus and is a carrier and can give it to someone else isn't going to be symptomatic, isn't going to know they have it, the most important thing you can do to protect your friends, protect your family, protect anyone you come in contact with is wear a face covering or mask," Baker said.

Baker refrained from offering any details about the phased reopening plan a state panel is set to unveil Monday or the future of his stay-at-home advisory, saying that he would have "a lot more to say" after the weekend.

He announced Friday a 24-hour extension to an executive order requiring non-essential businesses to close. The extra day, Baker said, is a "technical extension" because the order was set to expire at midnight on Sunday, before the panel's report will be public.

Returning to a common theme in his public appearances in recent weeks, Baker said the state's progress out of the status quo must be deliberate and careful to balance economic and public health needs.

"Some people are going to say it's too slow and some people are going to say it's too fast," he said. "I understand and respect that. But this is our idea of the best shot we have at continuing to make progress and not giving the virus a chance to get back out of the barn."

Officials launched an [online portal](#) Friday listing 250 sites across Massachusetts where residents can get tested for COVID-19. The state will also partner with Wal-Mart to open testing locations in store parking lots in Salem, Brockton, Quincy, and Plymouth.

Each site will be able to test 40 to 50 people a day, "so that's about an additional 600 tests a week," Health and Human Services Secretary Marylou Sudders said at the press conference. "The site will use a self-administered nasal swab test that will allow those being tested to swab their own nose on site while in their vehicles and observed by a trained medical professional to ensure that the sample is taken correctly."

The administration has targeted increased COVID-19 testing capacity and availability as another key feature in its attempts to keep the virus at bay in the long term. Baker on Thursday said he [wants](#) laboratories to be able to conduct 45,000 tests per day in July and 75,000 tests per day in December.



Cities and towns in Massachusetts, which face significant budget pressures due to a drop in tax revenues amid the economic slowdown, will soon get a significant boost from \$502 million in federal relief funding. Plymouth County will also receive \$90 million, while the city of Boston will receive \$121 million in additional funding, Baker said Friday.

The funding is about 25 percent of what Massachusetts has received from the Coronavirus relief fund Congress created to offset COVID-19 financial strain.

A new "Phase Four" bill the U.S. House of Representatives appears poised to approve today [would direct](#) another \$12 billion toward Massachusetts state government, according to Congresswoman Lori Trahan.

However, the legislation has little support from Republicans that control the Senate. White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany on Friday [said](#) President Donald Trump views the \$3 trillion House bill as a "nonstarter."

### **MSADA Letter to Gov. Baker on Re-Opening Dealership Showrooms**

Gov. Charlie Baker's current Coronavirus-induced closure order is set to expire on May 18. On April 28, the governor established an advisory commission on re-opening the economy. The commission is charged with making recommendations to the governor by Monday, May 18. Your Association has participated in that process and presented our thoughts on how to best re-open dealership showrooms safely for customers and employees. This week, the governor did announce the framework of his four-phase re-opening plan, which included a 13-point set of mandatory safety and health protocols businesses will be required to comply with when re-opening occurs. At the governor's daily press conference today, he gave no indication as to what he will proclaim on Monday.

As Gov. Baker works towards a decision regarding re-opening the economy, your Association this week sent the following letter to him, requesting showrooms to be opened in the phase one re-opening process while complying with his mandatory operational protocols so as to ensure a clean and safe environment for employees and customers. Dealers are already engaged in safe practices as they relate to service and parts operations, as well as the completion of on-line initiated sales. The mandatory protocols would be no issue for opened showrooms at dealerships.

May 13, 2020

The Honorable Charlie Baker  
Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
State House, Room 280  
Boston, MA 02133

### **RE: Re-Opening Motor Vehicle Dealerships Under Phase One Health and Safety Protocols**

Dear Governor Baker:



Thank you for your continued efforts to guide the Commonwealth through this unprecedented pandemic crisis. On behalf of our members and their dedicated employees, we write as a follow-up to the release of your four-phase re-opening plan announced earlier this week.

Our Association represents the interests of 425 franchised new-car and truck dealers in Massachusetts. Our member dealers employ over 25,000 men and women in their franchise stores. More importantly, retail activity at our member dealerships represents almost 20% of the retail activity in Massachusetts. As the re-opening advisory commission approaches the May 18 deadline for submitting recommendations to you, there are several key matters we would like to reiterate which we addressed in our April 23 letter to you and in our comments submitted to the advisory commission on May 1. **Frankly, there is nothing stated in the specific, mandatory health and safety protocols announced on May 11 in your preliminary four-phase program that would pose a problem for our member dealers should we receive the green light to open showrooms on May 18.**

**1. Strict Health and safety protocols have been in place in the service and repair area of dealership facilities since your initial closure order in March and the designation of “essential” businesses.**

As essential businesses under the March 31 order, the service/maintenance /repair and parts segments of our facilities have implemented and been operating with extensive protocols to protect the health and safety of customers and employees:

- Vehicle drop-off/pick-up safety measures and procedures
- Sanitizing and disinfecting of vehicles regularly
- Social distanced/marked waiting area
- Elimination of coffee/refreshments for service customers
- Plastic shields at service area check-in/check-out counter
- PPE for all workers and staff
- Regularly wiping/disinfecting of all areas

Furthermore, since the issuance of guidance on May 4 governing sales activities at dealerships, these protocols also have been implemented as dealers conduct and complete internet and remote sales for customers. With such protocols in place thus far, this gives us the unique opportunity to easily transition these protocols into the opening of showrooms safely and with the best interests of our customers and employees in mind and practice.

**2. Auto dealerships by nature are conducive to social distancing and are controllable environments that, once open, readily can be set up to comply with rigorous safety and health protocols.**

Elements of the business environment in dealership showrooms that can enhance safety and health protocols once open are:

- Large square-footage showrooms;
- Vehicle showroom displays naturally separate foot traffic;
- No ‘surge’ times;
- No narrow aisles or confined check outs;
- Customers typically arrive sporadically;



- Much of the information and data needed to process a sale can be done online and with minimal customer contact.

### **3. Dealerships presently practice strict health and safety protocols and are prepared for restrictions on open showrooms.**

As we noted in our April 23 letter to you and our May 1 comments to the commission, our Association has worked extensively to develop a vigorous plan to protect customers and employees in the showroom environment based on the following protocols that we have had in place for weeks now:

- Maintain strict social distancing practices to facilitate a minimum six feet of separation between workers and customers and adopt policies and practices that ensure minimum contact between the public and the employees, including limiting capacity to a percentage of that allowed by building code such as 40%-50%. We would be open to an appointment-based system in Phase 1 to facilitate to an additional layer of protection in staying below the limited capacity thresholds.
- Adopting contactless payment systems.
- Handling all paperwork presented to, and received from the customer, with latex gloves. Following the exchange of documents, it is recommended that employees dispose of the gloves in proper refuse containers and employees wash their hands for at least 20 seconds.
- Prohibit any and all self-serve food and beverage.
- Prior to signing any documents, provide pens to the customer in sealed plastic baggies and direct the customer to retain the pen so as to minimize the risk of cross contamination
- Permitting customers to perform test drives alone without dealership personnel, including, before and after the test drive, wiping down all surfaces of a vehicle in which the customer or dealership personnel have touched/test driven.
- Following CDC sanitation recommendations, including disinfecting surfaces routinely and at frequent intervals.
- Throughout the day, frequently cleaning and disinfecting all employee and public areas of the store.
- Make numerous containers of hand sanitizer available for staff and public use.
- Following the close of each business day, thoroughly clean and sanitize the dealership in accordance with CDC's Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Recommendations.

Finally, there are three points we need to reinforce regarding the current environment under which dealerships operate and about which they worry as threats to their business survivability. Our greatest fear is that, as we approach and achieve the end



of this crisis, we will have lost a number of dealerships to permanent closure.

First, the May 4 ban on test drives hurts dealers' ability to finalize a vehicle sale. One would not buy a house without a walk through or buy a pair of shoes without trying them on. Similarly, a key component of the sale is the test drive. We feel these can be done safely and without exposure to contamination as the customer conducts it unaccompanied by any dealership personnel, with a pre- and post-drive vehicle cleaning. We would respectfully request that on May 18 test drives are restored, as we have described.

Second, most auto dealerships in Massachusetts are family-owned (multi-generational in many cases), one brand businesses. To that end, they are most often tightly knit to the communities. Dealers who have received Paycheck Protection Program funds will be pushing up to eight-week deadlines very soon, especially those who applied on April 3 when the program opened and received funds the following week. If showrooms are continued to be closed to the end of the month, such dealerships would be financially stressed and pushed back to square one to late March/early April to a situation that prompted them to seek the PPP loan in the first place. Any continued economic stress will jeopardize their ability to survive as viable employers and tax producers.

Third, dealerships are major contributor to the state and local tax bases. As vehicle sales remain stymied, that certainly has adversely impacted the flow of sales, income, and excise tax revenues to the Commonwealth and municipalities. Re-invigorating vehicle sales will have a positive effect on governmental revenues at a time of severe fiscal crisis for public bodies.

**Customer and employee health and safety are paramount to our business operations. Our member dealers are well prepared to take all measures necessary to protect them as dealership showrooms are re-opened. We respectfully request inclusion in Phase One of your approach to re-opening Massachusetts with the strict restrictions needed to protect our customers and employees.**

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Should you require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Chris Connolly  
Herb Connolly Motor Group President  
MSADA President

Robert O'Koniewski  
MSADA Executive Vice President

### **CDC, EPA Resources and Standards for COVID-19 Disinfectant Products**

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) consolidated Coronavirus-related information for businesses [here](#), and yesterday, the Environmental Protection Agency released its [List N Tool](#), an app that allows users to quickly identify disinfectant products that meet the EPA's criteria for use against COVID-19. The new app gives businesses and consumers critical information for cleaning and disinfecting buildings, and provides a list of [more than 400 surface disinfectant products that meet the agency's criteria](#) for use against SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19). The EPA also announced actions to



ensure new disinfectant products are safe and effective to use against COVID-19 and can be added to the EPA's list as quickly as possible. For more information about safely operating a dealership during COVID-19, please see NADA's [Dealership Health and Safety Concerns During a Pandemic FAQs](#) (which also includes several updated, useful links to additional information).

### **NADA's Lifeline Series Webinars**

NADA is working to make sure dealers have the information they need to combat COVID-19 disruptions. Here is information on Monday's webinar:

· **Monday, May 18, 1pm-2pm ET:** [\*The Best Ideas from ATD 20 Groups, Part 2: In Times of COVID-19 Pandemic\*](#). ATD 20 Group consultant Ray Grapsy will review best ideas on business development, marketing, sales, parts and service and communications and discuss key short- and long-term strategy initiatives as dealers recover from the economic damage of the pandemic.

Click [here](#) for access to previous webinars.

### **Daily Massachusetts COVID-19 Tracker**

The state's COVID-19 Dashboard with up-to-the-date data can be found [here](#).