



WHITE PAPER

WHY HYGIENE BARRIERS (SNEEZE GUARDS) ARE PART OF THE NEW NORMAL

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As social distancing becomes an expected part of our daily existence, retail establishments, food service, and workplaces are all being challenged to integrate safe spacing into their operations. In addition to integrating more physical space between occupants, personal protective gear, and rigid cleaning regimens, physical barriers—such as plexiglass partitions and sneeze-guards—provide a government-advocated protecting solution. Why? Because physical barriers help stop airborne droplets potentially carrying the COVID-19 virus in situations where there isn't room—or it isn't functional—for people to stand further apart.

Physical barriers help stop airborne droplets potentially carrying COVID-19



Back in March, grocery stores such as Kroger, Walmart, and Albertsons were early adopters, installing plexiglass partitions at checkout counters to protect customers and cashiers. According to an [article published by Reuters](#), author Lisa Baertlein reported that, “Kroger – the largest U.S. supermarket chain with nearly 2,800 stores including Ralphs, Harris Teeter and Food 4 Less – [installed] the partitions at all cash registers, pharmacy counters and Starbucks kiosks.”



From there, other establishments followed suit, including bars, restaurants, and drug stores. Hospitals constructed plexiglass enclosures to protect triage workers from potentially infected patients. And now, as states work to re-open safely, hygiene barriers are likely to find their way into a wide variety of face-to-face interactions where they haven't been used previously.

Government agencies and national public health institutes are recommending partitions to a wide array of businesses. In its publication “[Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#),” OSHA calls for employers to install “*engineering controls*” to protect workers—specifically “*Installing physical barriers, such as clear plastic sneeze guards.*”

OSHA recommends Installing physical barriers



The CDC recommends partitions in many of its documents and reports. On its [*“Workplace Decision Tool,”*](#) the CDC advises business owners and managers to *“Encourage social distancing and enhance spacing between employees, including through physical barriers, changing layout of workspaces, encouraging telework, closing or limiting access to communal spaces, staggering shifts and breaks, and limiting large events, when and where feasible.”* The CDC repeats its recommendation in other industry-specific reports as well. For instance, in its COVID-19 [*“Considerations for Restaurants and Bars,”*](#) the CDC advises:

“Install physical barriers, such as sneeze guards and partitions, particularly in areas where it is difficult for individuals to remain at least 6 feet apart. Barriers can be useful in restaurant kitchens and at cash registers, host stands, or food pickup areas where maintaining physical distance of at least 6 feet is difficult.”

– Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



In [*“Guidance for Dental Settings,”*](#) the CDC says: for dental facilities with open floor plans, to prevent the spread of pathogens there should be:

- *At least 6 feet of space between patient chairs.*
- *Physical barriers between patient chairs. Easy-to-clean floor-to-ceiling barriers will enhance effectiveness of portable HEPA air filtration systems (check to make sure extending barriers to ceiling will not interfere with fire sprinkler systems).*

The CDC also names specific situations where barriers may be useful in other COVID-19 guidance articles including; [*“Guidance for Child Care Programs that Remain Open,”*](#) [*“What Airport Retail or Food Service Workers Need to Know about COVID-19,”*](#) [*“Interim guidance for Homeless Service Providers to Plan and Respond to COVID-19,”*](#) and others.

As time passes, sneeze guards (more broadly referred to as hygiene barriers) and partitions will find their way into situations and uses where we haven't seen them previously. Business Insider reported that, "Experts say the office as we knew it is gone and companies will need one-way hallways, sneeze guards, and other safety measures to let employees return." An article published on BuzzFeed included "23 Pictures of Reopening In Other Countries That Look A Bit Different Than What We're Seeing In The U.S." This included six images of partitions including:

- *At a gym in Hong Kong that uses clear partitions to separate the cardio machines*
- *A school in China which has set up dividers to separate the students as they eat lunch*
- *A school in China where students' desks are each surrounded by plexiglass shields on three sides*
- *A Starbucks in Taiwan where shared tables are sectioned off with dividers*
- *A bar in Germany where the bartender and other employees are separated from the patrons by a clear partition*
- *A restaurant in Japan which has placed acrylic barriers down the middle of tables to physically distance the friends sitting across the table from one another*
- *Americans may very well see similar barriers and installations in their hometowns in the near future*

Benefits of Sneeze Guards and Partitions

1. Create a social distancing solution that is easy to clean and sanitize.
2. Protect employees so they are comfortable being at work.
3. Create emotional ease for customers. Comfortable customers will be more likely to choose and recommend your establishment. They'll stay longer, buy more, and be more likely to come back.
4. Make it possible to have more protected customers in the establishment at one time, which will lead to increased revenue.
5. Clear plexiglass provides full viewing, which results in a non-claustrophobic experience.