

## Temporary store closure tips and considerations

Updated March 17, 2020

This document offers messaging and communication steps that might be helpful if an affiliate decides that a temporary store closure is necessary in response to a natural disaster, health emergency or otherwise. It is not meant to be an exhaustive list. Each affiliate should consider what is best for its store and community. Affiliate leaders are urged to communicate with neighboring affiliate and Habitat for Humanity ReStore leaders about their plans. This can help with regional consistency with messaging and also present opportunities to coordinate and support neighboring operations.

This document is broken down into three parts to help segment the temporary store closure process.

1. Affiliate decision-making and considerations.
2. Public messaging.
3. Operations.

### Affiliate decision-making and considerations:

1. **As affiliate leaders consider how an emergency will affect the various aspects of their operations, including their Habitat ReStore, a temporary closure might be considered to mitigate risk and protect the health and safety of the staff members, volunteers, shoppers and donors.**
2. **Leaders should seek guidance from their local health and regulatory agencies and follow instructions from state and local governments on the specific recommendations for retail outlets.**
  - a. If your affiliate and Habitat ReStore remain open, reevaluate the risks frequently as new information becomes available. If the recommendations in your area do not mandate closing any aspect of your operation, make sure your public messaging conveys the protective measures your affiliate and store are following to ensure public safety. Please refer to the CDC guidelines and local governmental guidance for details. More information can be found on [MyHabitat](#).
3. **Create an HR plan.**
  - a. Create a plan for when and how to notify staff members, both in your Habitat ReStore and other affiliate departments.
  - b. Communicate any payroll or benefit details to each employee and explain how they will be impacted by the closure. Details for salaried employees may differ from those for hourly employees. (Seek guidance from local counsel to understand details.)
  - c. Communicate to staff members who will be able to work from home (such as donation call center employees or donation procurement personnel) about what their responsibilities might entail during a store closure. Create a work plan with those employees and make sure all necessary technology is in place for them to perform their duties.

- d. Create a plan to manage “in-house” workdays during the closure. (See the Operations section in this document.)
  - e. Draft internal talking points to answer questions that may come from the general public. Educate your staff and volunteers on whether they should answer these questions and — if your policy does not permit them to answer — where they should refer the person who is asking.
4. **Review all contracts and lease terms.**
- a. Review the details of any lease terms that apply to obligations regarding operating days or hours, and discuss any long-term changes with your landlord.
  - b. As soon as possible, notify vendors and service providers that will be impacted. This may include waste management, merchandise vendors, or city or county community service offices.

### Public messaging:

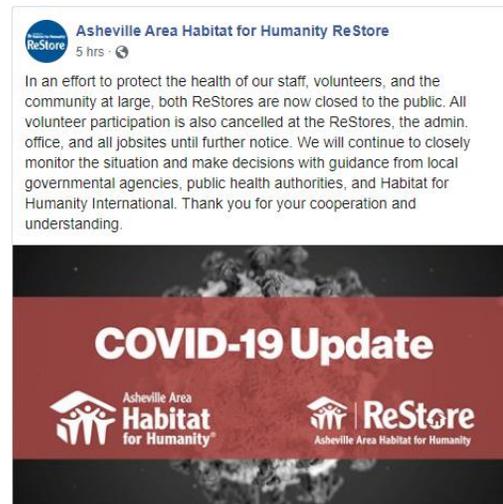
1. **Create a communication plan** — Communicating a clear message to the general public is vital to continuing relationships and building trust through transparency. If possible, work with other local Habitat ReStores to create a consistent message in a metro area.
  - a. **Exterior signage** — Make sure signage about the closure is clearly posted on all buildings outlining any contact points or available timelines.
    - i. **Example:** *Thank you for visiting the Habitat ReStore. For the safety of our staff members, customers, donors and volunteers, we are temporarily closed. Please see our website (insert Habitat Restore website address) for more details.*
  - b. **Web presence** — Update all affiliate and Habitat ReStore websites with information on the closure, including any available timelines, donation information (if applicable during the closure) and point of contact.
    - i. **Example:** *The safety of our customers and donors is our priority. In response to the COVID-19 virus, we have decided to close the Habitat ReStore, beginning DATE. We are closely watching the recommendations of local public health agencies, and we will reopen the store when it is safe to do so. Beginning DATE, all scheduled Habitat ReStore donation pickups will be canceled and will not be rescheduled at this time.*  
*Questions? Email [restore@mytownhfh.org](mailto:restore@mytownhfh.org).*
  - c. **Newsletter email list** — If you regularly send a communication to a shopper or donor list, send them a temporary closure notice.
    - i. **Example:** *Dear Habitat ReStore shoppers, donors, volunteers and supporters,*  
  
*Because of the recent outbreak of COVID-19, and in an abundance of caution concerning the safety of our staff, volunteers and customers, we have made the tough decision to temporarily close our Habitat ReStores to the general public. We want to do our part to reduce exposure of at-risk staff members and volunteers to the virus, and to reinforce healthy communities. Our team will determine the next steps after DATE. Please keep an eye on our website, Facebook pages, newsletters and*

store signage for future updates. We realize this impacts your ability to shop at our Habitat ReStore or pick up any purchases that you may have left behind, as well as our ability to offer donation drop-off and pickup services. We apologize for the inconvenience.

*Example from Metro Atlanta ReStores*

- d. **Social media** — All social media accounts should be updated to communicate the latest message from the Habitat ReStore in conjunction with the website and other affiliate communications. Designate someone to respond to social media comments and discuss how any contentious messages should be addressed. (Example: Q: *Are employees being paid during the closure?* A: *Our staff's safety and well-being are a priority for our affiliate, and all accommodations available are being made to ensure minimal interruptions to their livelihoods.*)

i. **Examples:**



- e. **Voicemail/automated email** — Update all voicemail messages to reflect the current store hours and closures. During the closure, try to have a point person check any messages to respond to inquiries in a timely fashion. If employees will not be working during the closure, make sure that any emails are updated with auto replies reflecting the current hours or closure of the store and where more information can be found. Ensure that donors, volunteers and other important contacts still have a way to get in touch with the store manager.

- i. **Example:** *“For the health and safety of our staff, our volunteers and the general public, all activities related to the Habitat ReStore are closed until further notice. Please check our website at (insert Habitat ReStore website) for the latest information. If you need to speak to a manager, please call (insert Habitat ReStore phone number).”*

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## Operations:

1. **Donation process** — During a temporary closure, the store may shutter all operations or choose to continue receiving or picking up donations. Will the Habitat ReStore still take donation calls during this time? Will corporate donations still be accepted? Deciding the right course of action and communicating that process to the public will be helpful when operations return to normal.
  - a. **Pickups:** Changes to the pickup process may include limiting the days or hours when pickups are available, placing limits on entering donors' homes, or canceling all residential pickups.
  - b. **Drop-offs:** Determine the best course of action for accepting donation drop-offs during the closure. Consider posting signage indicating your drop-off protocol.
  - c. **Corporate donors:** Some corporate donations that require minimal personnel (e.g., items that are loaded and unloaded with a forklift at either location) may continue as scheduled to maintain the continuity of service throughout the temporary closure.
2. **In-house work days** — Even if the store is closed to the public, work could still be done inside the store. Plans may include proactive procurement donation outreach; workdays to paint, refresh, reset the store layout, update displays, price and process merchandise, or purge dead or obsolete inventory; and performing a deep clean of your front counters, offices, breakrooms and bathrooms. Make sure you have supplies and personal protective equipment to keep staff members and volunteers safe. Restrict the number of people in the store to the number recommended by regulatory agencies.
3. **Volunteers** — Consider how your closure will affect volunteers and those participating in court-ordered community service. If you are conducting in-house work days, consider the health risks for at-risk groups (individuals with compromised immune systems or those over the age of 60).