Apple reopens some US stores amid COVID-19, but they'll work differently

Enlarge / Customers and staff in an Apple Store mid-pandemic.

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Apple will re-open 25 more of its retail stores in the United States and 12 more in Canada by the end of this week, according to a public note from the company's SVP of retail, Deirdre O'Brien. However, the company's safety policies make clear that the shopping experience is going to be markedly different in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"In every store, we're focused on limiting occupancy and giving everybody lots of room, and renewing our focus on one-on-one, personalized service at the Genius Bar and throughout the store," O'Brien wrote. Her note added that temperature checks will be conducted at the door, health questions will be posted at the entrance to screen for symptoms, and face masks will be required of all customers and staff. Any customer who does not have a face mask will be provided one on entry to the store.

Additionally, each store will have full-time janitorial staff cleaning the space periodically throughout the day, and social-distancing rules will be enforced.

Would-be-customers can use an online "Find a Store" tool to

see whether their local stores are open. Some stores will offer curbside or storefront pickup instead of in-store service.

The company says its choices on which stores to open when have been guided both by data, such as regional cases of the virus, and local health officials' recommendations. It also says it will close stores again if that becomes necessary in any additional waves of the virus.

Here's O'Brien's exact wording on the subject:

> *Our commitment is to only move forward with a reopening once we're confident we can safely return to serving customers from our stores. We look at every available piece of data—including local cases, near and long-term trends, and guidance from national and local health officials. These are not decisions we rush into—and a store opening in no way means that we won't take the preventative step of closing it again should local conditions warrant.*

Last week, Apple reopened some stores in Alabama, Alaska, Idaho, and South Carolina, and it has reopened more than 100 stores across all countries.

Beginning today or Wednesday (depending on the location), additional stores are opening in California, Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, Oklahoma, and Washington state. Certain stores in the Canadian provinces of British Columbia, Manitoba, and Nova Scotia will also open on May 20.

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