



Coronavirus Communications Toolkit for Banks



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As the coronavirus continues to impact communities across the country, America's banks are making the health and well-being of their employees, customers and communities their top priority. They are also stepping up to assist individual and business customers affected by the pandemic, as well as the communities they serve. In this way, banks can play a critical role in helping the nation weather this pandemic and ensure that any economic disruptions are limited.

Topline Points

- Nothing is more important than the safety and health of our employees and customers, and America's banks have taken prudent steps to prepare for this difficult situation.
- Banks of all sizes are also responding to the needs of individual and business customers directly impacted, while continuing to execute their own business continuity plans under challenging conditions.
- Banks of all sizes stand ready to support the customers and communities they serve as well as the broader economy and help the nation overcome this challenge.
- The initiatives banks are taking to assist customers, which vary by institution and depend on a customer's individual circumstances, include (but are not limited to):
 - Offering hardship programs
 - Waiving certain fees
 - Deferring loan payments
 - Providing temporary credit lines
 - Loan modifications
 - Helping customers use mobile and digital banking platforms
 - Alerting customers to scams related to the coronavirus
 - Offering "safe" banking services by expanding drive-through and ATM operations
 - Establishing "Golden Hours" when at risk individuals such as seniors can bank in a branch with less risk of exposure to the virus
- The industry can take these steps at this difficult moment in part because America's banks entered the current COVID-19 crisis from a position of strength thanks to record capital and liquidity levels, as well as prudent planning and risk management.
- This is a healthcare crisis not a financial crisis, and the best way to limit the economic damage is to follow the guidance of health care professionals so we can contain the virus as quickly as possible. Banks will do their part.

Bottom Line: In this crisis, banks are here to help, and we should be prepared to share that message with the public and policymakers.



Sample Talking Points

Use the following talking points to respond to media and customer inquiries and develop other communication materials. Be sure to tailor the text to fit your specific situation and your bank.

At times of uncertainty, one thing you can always count on is the safety of your money at a bank.

- When you deposit your money at a bank, you get the comfort of knowing that your funds are secure and insured by the government.
- You don't have the same level of protection when your money is outside the banking system.
- Uncertain times are exactly when you want the certainty and dependability of a bank.

[BANK NAME] has plans in place to handle a range of emergencies so our customers' funds remain protected and accessible.

- Every bank in the country is required by law to have disaster recovery and business continuity plans in place with multiple backup systems.
- [BANK NAME]'s federal regulator, [INSERT YOUR BANK'S REGULATOR], regularly examines the bank to make sure we have detailed, tested disaster recovery procedures and business resumption plans.
- The safest place for your money is in the bank. It's FDIC-insured and accessible, thanks to bank technology that allows you to pay bills, make deposits and send payments from anywhere, anytime.

Banks have a proven record of effective emergency preparedness and disaster recovery.

- Throughout history, U.S. banks have been prepared for and responded to recessions, natural disasters—including pandemics—and other business disruptions.
- When faced with natural disasters and unexpected events, banks have a proven record of operating smoothly, protecting consumers' deposits and providing continued access to their funds.
- Lessons learned from previous health threats—including the avian flu, SARS and Ebola,—have strengthened the banking industry's ability to prepare for and minimize disruption due to a pandemic.

Banks are there for their customers in good times and bad.

- We encourage our customers to reach out to us to let us know if they have been affected by the coronavirus.
- We are happy to discuss with them a range of assistance options depending on their circumstances.
- That help can include having certain fees, loan modifications or simply instructing a customer on how to use our online banking tools.

Background:

When a disaster strikes, every consumer should know their bank is prepared, their deposits are safe, and they will have continued access to their funds. Banks are required by law to have extensive disaster recovery plans in place to protect customer accounts, and state and federal regulators routinely examine each bank on their preparations.



Sample FAQ for Frontline Staff

Customize this FAQ as appropriate to respond to customer concerns. Be sure to tailor the text to fit your specific situation.

Is the bank closed?

Our bank is open for business, but we have altered our operations to protect the safety of our staff and our customers. For example, we are limiting our branch lobby functions until we have determined it is safe to resume normal operations. We will be adhering to the latest public health guidance in making that determination. In the meantime, we encourage you to use our mobile and online services to conduct your banking business, and we are also allowing banking by appointment for some specific transactions such as loan closings. For the most up to date information, you can check our website and follow us on [SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS].

Is my money safe?

The safest place for your money is in the bank. It's FDIC-insured and it's convenient. [BANK NAME]'s federal regulator, [INSERT YOUR BANK'S REGULATOR], regularly examines the bank to make sure we have detailed, tested disaster recovery procedures and business resumption plans.

Have you had employees contract the virus?

Nothing is more important than the health and safety of our staff and our customers. We continue to follow the latest guidelines from the CDC in all of our facilities. This includes expanded cleaning of our public areas and work spaces, expanded use of hand sanitizer and social distancing. In addition, we have asked many [all] of our staff to work from home to limit their exposure risk and further protect our customers.

Which bank services are available?

While our branches in [CITY/REGION] are closed for the safety of our employees and customers, you still have access to online banking and telephone banking. Visit our website at [ONLINE BANKING SITE], use our mobile banking app or call the bank at [INSERT PHONE NUMBER] to conduct transactions. [LIST AVAILABLE SERVICES, INCLUDING OPEN BRANCHES AND ATMS, ONLINE BANKING, MOBILE BANKING AND TELEPHONE BANKING.]

How will I make loan payments?

[PROVIDE DETAILED INFORMATION ABOUT HOW CUSTOMERS SHOULD MAKE LOAN PAYMENTS AND WHETHER THE BANK WILL WAIVE FEES FOR LATE PAYMENTS.]

My usual ATM is not accessible, where can I go to get cash?

Our ATM network is up and running. Customers may withdraw cash from their checking accounts using their ATM debit cards. For your convenience, [BANK NAME] will waive or reimburse the usual fee to use an out-of-network ATM. Be aware that while we will waive the bank's fee for using an out-of-network ATM, the ATM owner may charge a separate fee that will not be reimbursed.

My direct deposit is not showing up in my account, what should I do?

There may be delays in processing transactions, including direct deposits, while [BANK NAME] activates our back-up plan. Contact us by phone at [INSERT PHONE NUMBER] to learn more about the status of your deposit.

Are the contents of my safe deposit box insured?

Items kept in your safe deposit box are not insured by the bank or the FDIC. You are responsible for insuring the contents of the safe deposit box, for example through your homeowner's policy. Contact the bank at [INSERT PHONE NUMBER] to learn more about the condition of your safe deposit box and its contents.



Sample Email/Letter to Customers If You are Forced to Close a Branch

Use this sample letter to inform your customers. Be sure to tailor the text to fit your specific situation.

Dear [CUSTOMER NAME],

We are writing to inform you that [LOCATION] branch[es] are currently closed due to [INSERT REASON FOR CLOSURE]. The health and safety of our employees and customers is a top priority for [BANK NAME], and we will re-open [LOCATION] branch[es] as soon as it's safe to do so.

What Happened

[INSERT GENERAL DETAILS PERTAINING TO THE SITUATION, IF RELEVANT.]

What We Are Doing

[BANK NAME] has put its disaster recovery plan into effect and our disaster recovery team continues to work hard to restore normal service levels to our customers and communities. [BANK NAME] will re-open offices as conditions permit in consideration of the health and safety of both our customers and employees.

- **Our online and mobile banking platforms are up and running.** Customers can use these services to perform all of the activities that are routinely available, including checking balances, transferring funds and paying bills.
- **Our ATM system is up and running.** Customers can retrieve cash from their checking accounts by using their ATM and debit cards. We will waive or reimburse fees for using another bank's ATM. However, those ATM owners may assess their own fees.
- [IF ATMS ARE NOT WORKING, SUGGEST OTHER WAYS THEY CAN GET CASH (MOBILE UNITS, PARTNER BANKS, ETC.)]
- **We are receiving and crediting direct deposits to customer accounts, such as social security and payroll.** We will be able to accept other deposits and execute transactions on certificates of deposit when we resume service at our offices.

The following branches are currently open:

[LIST BRANCHES THAT ARE OPEN]

The following branches are currently closed:

[LIST APPLICABLE BRANCHES THAT ARE CLOSED]

For More Information

[BANK NAME] has created a special customer service line. The number is [INSERT PHONE NUMBER]. Our customer service line will provide up-to-date information about available banking services and open branches. In addition, customers will be able to leave a message that will be handled as soon as possible by a [BANK NAME] representative.

Thank you for your understanding and patience during this time. Our thoughts are with you and your family, and we sincerely hope all are safe and healthy.

Sincerely,
[BANK CEO]