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St. Louis Business Journal

Reopened restaurants have had 'good results,' association says

By [Jacob Kirn](#) – Economic Development Editor, St. Louis Business Journal
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Restaurants that have reopened in Missouri have "had good results," the head of the [Missouri Restaurant Association](#) said.

CEO Bob Bonney said restaurants that reopened were operating at about 50% capacity because of state social distancing requirements. Still, he said, member restaurants did "comparable numbers" or were slightly up on Monday and Tuesday compared with the same days last year. He attributed the results to pent-up demand, but said that weekend numbers would not return to normal because of the social distancing requirements.

"I think the public is anxious to get the state reopened and do the things that they enjoy doing," Bonney said.

PHOTOS: WHAT REOPENING LOOKED LIKE IN ST. CHARLES ON MONDAY

At the same time, Bonney said patrons "want to be made to feel safe."

"I believe, and our industry believes," that it's safer to eat in a restaurant than shop in large retail or grocery stores, he said.

New safety measures — in addition to the distancing of tables — could include the use of disposable condiments and salt and pepper, Bonney said. It's also [advised](#) members to increase cleaning of common areas, including tables and chairs. Staff at reopened restaurants have been seen wearing masks.

Though the industry has been hit as hard as any, Bonney said he believes the vast majority of restaurants will reopen.

He cited an April 10 survey by the National Restaurant Association that said 2% of restaurants had permanently closed, with another 8% saying they anticipated taking that step in the next 30 days.

Now, restaurants are advocating changes to the federal Paycheck Protection Program, part of the CARES Act, passed to mitigate the economic devastation caused by Covid-19 pandemic orders.

Bonney said restaurants are asking the U.S. Department of the Treasury and Small Business Administration to lengthen the amount of time businesses have to spend PPP money on payroll expenses. The current eight weeks doesn't work for many restaurants, Bonney said.

"When dining rooms are still closed or severely restricted, it's impossible to have a need for that number of employee hours when you're doing 20% to 25% of your normal business," Bonney said. "We're asking for more time."

St. Louis Mayor Lyda Krewson [has indicated](#) that restaurants and bars can open with restrictions on May 18, in line with a gradual reopening plan coordinated with St. Louis County. Other area counties, including Jefferson and St. Charles, opened Monday with the state of Missouri.