



Agriculture and Farm Operation Response Toolkit

Make a Plan for COVID-19 Mitigation in the Workplace

The Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA), the Oregon Health Authority (OHA), Oregon Occupational Safety and Health (Oregon OSHA), and your local public health authority (LPHA) encourage you to proactively make a plan for mitigating the spread of COVID-19 on your farm, ranch or agricultural operation. This should include [gathering information for yourself](#), displaying education materials, implement physical distancing measures, assess workflow on farm, and be familiar with local resources available to employees.

The purpose of this toolkit is to provide guidance in developing your plan.

Step 1: Protect the Current Workforce

A. Display Information and Educational Materials

Displaying information and materials in common languages is an effective measure to communicate expectations on the farm. Information to display could include:

- [Face covering guidelines](#)
- [Physical distancing reminders](#)
- [Self-screening for symptoms](#)
- [Workplace safety practices](#)
- [Handwashing practices](#)
- [Local public health contact information](#)

B. Communicating COVID-19 Seriousness with Workers

- Ensure workers understand the [symptoms of COVID-19](#) and the importance of self-screening.
- Encourage workers to stay home if they are sick.
- Ensure signage is provided in the appropriate language related to identifying symptoms.
- Encourage workers to take their temperature before coming to work.
- Modify your operation, if needed to accommodate for social distancing.
- Provide [Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\)](#) when possible

C. Optional Screening of Workers:

Screening workers for symptoms is a voluntary strategy many employers have adopted. If you choose to do this, policies and procedures for screening should be developed. Consider reviewing the [CDC Frequently Asked Question webpage](#), including the section regarding “Should we be screening for COVID-19 Symptoms”.

- Incorporate physical distancing practices into a staging area that leads to screening station(s).
- Appoint a screening monitor (or multiple if needed). Provide information in multiple languages as appropriate.
- Consider worker privacy, physical distancing, and/or physical barriers when designing screening station(s).
- Provide appropriate PPE based on screening station design to eliminate or minimize your screener’s exposure.
- Provide training on thermometer use, appropriate use of PPE, and physical distancing protocol for screeners.

- Consider checking temperatures of workers at the start of each shift. Identify anyone with a fever of 100.4°F / 38°C or greater (follow the thermometer manufacturer's instructions for use).
 - One method is to use a [non-contact infrared thermometer](#) designed for taking peoples temperatures.
 - If a thermometer contacts a worker, implement appropriate cleaning between each use following the manufacturer's recommendation.
- Respectfully ask workers if they are feeling sick or have had close contact with sick individuals, specifically symptoms such as:
 - Fever
 - Cough
 - Sore throat
 - Shortness of breath
 - New loss of taste or smell
 - Symptoms commonly associated with foodborne illnesses (vomiting, diarrhea, sore throat with fever, jaundice)
- If records related to screening are kept, worker privacy and [record retention](#) should be considered.
- Develop practices on how to exclude workers identified as symptomatic from the workplace.
 - Consider the reporting of symptomatic worker's to your [LPHA](#).
 - Provide handouts or training materials related to resources for sick workers (e.g. Monitor Advocate System, sick leave, FMLA, etc.).
 - Include procedures for workers to report contact with a suspected or confirmed coronavirus case.
- Conduct training for supervisory staff regarding monitoring and reporting of symptoms in the workplace.

D. Direct Sick Workers to Stay Home:

Workers who appear to have symptoms including a fever, cough, shortness of breath, or a two-or-more of the following symptoms including chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, or new loss of taste or smell, upon arrival at work, or who develop these symptoms during the day should immediately be separated from others at the workplace, sent to their permanent or temporary housing arrangements.

- Check to see if you are subject to the employer paid [COVID Emergency Paid Sick Leave](#) laws and how it applies to your company or operation.
- Actively send sick workers home if they are at work and encourage sick workers to stay home.
- Review sick leave policies to ensure that workers are not penalized for taking sick leave due to COVID-19.
- Implement a system for workers to alert a supervisor in a timely manner if they or a coworker are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms.
- Monitor absenteeism to watch for concerning trends and implement plans to cover essential tasks.
- Work with LPHA to facilitate the identification of other exposed and potentially exposed individuals.
- Notify coworkers who have had close contact with a worker sick with coronavirus, without identifying the sick worker.
- The LPHA in conjunction with ODA, OHA, and the Oregon OSHA consultative branch will work with the farm to ensure they are implementing any needed closure for cleaning and disinfection to stop the further spread of COVID-19 amongst the workforce.
- Home isolation and testing policies should be developed in order to determine a path for workers to return. Follow CDC or OHA guidelines when they become available.

- Seasonal workers should be provided contact information to the LPHA to access support services.

E. Physical Distancing:

- OR OSHA requires each farm appoint a physical distancing officer with adequate authority to enforce policies, consider that disciplinary actions may be necessary.
- Monitor physical distancing in the field, at workstations, in common areas, entryways, at the time clock, in the administration offices, in break spaces and restrooms, at handwashing and hand sanitizing stations, in addition to parking lots.
 - Stagger work schedules so workers don't crowd each other when they arrive and leave work.
 - Stagger break and lunch times to reduce the gathering of groups of workers in limited areas.
 - Consider grouping together workers to limit cross-contact.
 - Consider written records of worker job assignments to simplify contact tracing.
 - Consider rearranging where people take breaks to meet the minimum physical distancing requirements.
 - Use signage and floor markings to manage flow with physical distancing.
 - Consider moving equipment or supplies to reduce areas of travel around the workplace.
- Options for workstations with proximity
 - Vacate every other 'like task' worker station on production lines to allow physical distancing.
 - [How to Align Manufacturing Workstations, if feasible](#)
 - Reduce production speed to reduce the number of workers needed on the line. Running multiple shifts may allow for additional production.
 - Extend production lines so workers can be farther apart.
 - Consider installing physical barriers such as plexiglass, strip curtains or other barriers that are effective in stopping the spread of COVID-19.
- Check ventilation in work areas to make sure fans do not blow from one worker directly onto another worker while being mindful of heat hazards.
- Encourage the use of face masks, including physical distancing in carpools and during other daily activities outside of work.
- Limit entry of visitors, contractors, and off-shift workers to essential business only. Keep a record of visitors and train them about your company's site-specific coronavirus safety procedures, including physical distancing, personal hygiene, and PPE requirements.
 - Agricultural operations with public visitors may be subject to additional rules and regulations outside of this toolkit.
- Stagger shipping and receiving orders to reduce potential exposure of transport personnel.

F. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):

- Educate workers on the importance of wearing a [face mask](#) in addition to practicing physical distancing. Consider implementing a policy requiring their use in the workplace.
- Consider supplying face shields that wrap around the sides of the wearer's face and extend below the chin.
- Reusable PPE such as face shields, aprons, gloves, and safety glasses must be cleaned and disinfected daily and stored in a clean location.
 - Follow disinfectant labels to ensure that the proper concentration is used.
 - PPE should not be taken home and never shared.
 - Reusable PPE should be cleaned, using soap and water, then [disinfected](#) between uses.
 - Follow disinfectant labels to ensure that the proper concentration is used.
 - Disinfected PPE should be protected during storage and distribution.
- Contact your LPHA (see contacts section) for assistance if you are unable to obtain face masks through your usual vendors.
- ~~Consult OR-OSHA for additional COVID related regulations.~~

G. Handwashing, sanitizers and sanitation:

- Follow guidelines in [Oregon OSHA temporary rule](#) and [factsheet](#).
- Designate a worker to ensure bathrooms and handwashing sinks are consistently stocked with warm, potable water, soap, and paper towels.
- Provide hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol. Encourage the use of hand sanitizer after handwashing.
- Provide supplemental hand sanitizer stations, wipes or towelettes, or clean water and soap in portable containers to facilitate more frequent hand washing after handling objects touched by others.
- Provide access to tissues, trash bins, and plastic bags for proper disposal of used tissues and other personal care products.
- Handwashing and toilet facilities must be sanitized at least three times per day.
- Consultate OR-OSHA for additional COVID related regulations.

H. Cleaning, Sanitation, and Disinfection of Surfaces:

- [Identify high touch surfaces](#) including, but not limited to door handles, faucets, toilet handles, light switches, countertops, chairs, tables, time clock areas, vehicles, equipment, machinery and tools, and physical barriers such as plexiglass.
- Consult OR-OSHA for additional COVID related regulations.
 - Identify high touch surfaces and develop sanitation practices that are applicable to their frequency of use. Suggest sanitizing these surfaces multiple times per day.
 - Refer to [ODA disinfectants for food contact surfaces](#) (English and Spanish) that are effective against COVID-19 and follow the label instructions regarding contact time.
 - Be sure to follow label directions when FOOD CONTACT SURFACES are sanitized. Many chemical disinfectants require a follow up water rinse when they are used before applying sanitizers at the appropriate concentration.
 - In many cases disinfection compounds may be the same as sanitizing compounds but at higher concentration. Disinfecting and sanitizing are not the same. Disinfecting refers to killing nearly 100% of germs on surfaces at much higher concentrations. Sanitizing refers to lowering the number of germs on a food contact surface to a level that meets safe public health standards.
 - Always wash and rinse visible dirt/debris from equipment before sanitizing.
 - Ensure workers use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) for work tasks.

Step 2: Prepare the Current Workforce

A. Educate Workers and Supervisors, Providing Information in [Multiple Languages](#) As Needed:

- Inform workers of the measures being taken to keep them safe, such as changes to accommodate distancing, cleaning, and [disinfection \(in English and Spanish\)](#).
- Collaborate with local community groups and labor unions to effectively communicate important COVID-19 information.
- Share information on how everyone can contribute to the mitigation of the spread of the coronavirus at work, including steps being taken in the workplace to establish social distancing, frequent hand washing, and other precautions.

- Hang posters/signs in appropriate languages from the health authorities (CDC, OSHA, OHA, LPHA) about how to prevent coronavirus transmission such as:
 - Proper respiratory etiquette, including covering coughs and sneezes and not touching eyes, noses, or mouths with unwashed hands or gloves.
 - [Cough and sneeze etiquette](#)
 - Appropriate handwashing with clean running water and soap for at least 20 seconds. Use paper towels to dry hands.
 - [When and How to Wash Your Hands](#)
 - Wash hands throughout the day and especially when arriving at work, before entering the production area, before and after eating or drinking or using tobacco, after using the toilet, after using a cell phone, after coughing or sneezing or touching the face, and after touching any surfaces or tool touched by others.
 - Appropriate use of PPE ([Spanish](#), [Vietnamese](#), [Russian](#), [Simplified Chinese](#), [Somali](#), [Arabic](#)).. [Use of Respirators, Facemasks, and Cloth Face Coverings](#)
- Communicate and reinforce safety messages and updates by frequently using methods that are appropriate for the target audience. Consider language and cultural needs of all workers.
 - Talk with workers about changes and seek their input regarding other potential protections that can be considered. Incorporation of this topic into pre-shift / toolbox conversations are highly encouraged.
 - Provide workers with information on how coronavirus can be spread, symptoms, and best practices to minimize exposure to it.
 - Offer education for workers to recognize how to minimize exposure to COVID-19 when not at work.
- Emphasize cleaning and sanitizing of frequently touched items that may not be addressed by sanitation crew activity, such as cell phones and tools.

B. Cross-training, Protocols, and Back-Up Plans:

- Create or review workplace procedures, which provide step-by-step descriptions of necessary tasks, including supplies and tools required. Ensure they are written in plain language.
 - [Standard Operating Procedures video \(resource\)](#)
- Provide cross-training opportunities for key positions to ensure support of critical tasks.
- Review and communicate plans for contracting substitute workers to supplement the regular workforce.

Step 3: Prepare for an Impacted or Reduced Workforce

A. Recruit and train new contingency workers:

- Reach out to current workers, who know the work environment and type of skills necessary, to recruit contingency workers.
- Seek out job boards with high schools, colleges, universities, and industry groups to reach those who may be seeking employment.
- Use social media and other networking tools to identify available workers.

B. Prepare to function with a reduced workforce

- Anticipate the possibility that you are unable to recruit and train replacement workers.
- Prioritize the most essential tasks and critical workers that are needed to maintain the production schedule.
- Identify tasks that could be considered for a reduced schedule.
- Prepare guidance for a situation where an owner, manager, or key leader becomes ill or needs to self-quarantine.

- Prepare other workers to assume temporary management responsibilities.
- Identify tools for remote communication.

Additional resources

- [Food Security and Farmworker Safety](#)
- [Agriculture labor housing guidance](#) (Oregon OSHA)
- [Interim Guidance for Agricultural Workers and Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers](#) (OHA)
- [Agricultural Employer Checklist for Creating a COVID-19 Assessment and Control Plan](#) (CDC)
- [Oregon Health Authority COVID-19 Updates](#) (OHA)
- [COVID-19 and Oregon OSHA](#) (Or-OSHA)
- [Oregon Department of Agriculture COVID-19 Information](#) (ODA)
- [Guidance for U-Pick Farms During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) (ODA)
- [Oregon whistleblower or retaliation protections](#) regarding workplace and health. (BOLI)
- [Whistleblower or retaliation protections regarding workplace safety and health](#). (Federal OSHA)
- [Monitor advocate system](#)
- [Oregon Farmers Markets Association Guidance for Markets and Vendors](#) (OFMA)
- [Manufacturing Workers and Employers](#) (CDC)
- [Western Regional Center to Enhance Food Safety COVID-19 resources](#)
- [County Specific Mask, Face Shield, Face Covering Guidance](#)
- [Meat and Poultry Processing Workers and Employers](#) (CDC)
- [Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers Responding to Coronavirus Disease](#) (CDC)
- [National Milk Producers Federation Coronavirus Resources](#) (NMPF.org)
- [US Food and Drug Administration Coronavirus Disease 2019](#) (FDA)
- [COVID Emergency Sick Leave Employer Paid Requirements](#) (DOL)

Contact information

- [Local Public Health Authority \(LPHA\)](#) – CD [Communicable Disease] Nurse or After-Hours CD columns. It is strongly encouraged that any plan include communication with your LPHA. There may be collaborative opportunities available.
 - LPHA may have capability to provide testing resources related to symptomatic individuals or outbreaks in the workplace
 - Contract tracing resources to support identified COVID positive exposure
 - Access to resources related to isolation in the community
- [Oregon OSHA Consultative Services](#) – education and outreach regarding workplace safety and health regulations, including those from Executive Orders.
- [Oregon Department of Agriculture](#) – education and outreach regarding maintaining a safe and stable food supply.