

SAFETY AND HEALTH GUIDANCE

COVID-19 Infection Prevention for Agricultural Employers and Employees

April 7, 2020

California employers are required to establish and implement an Injury and Illness Prevention Program (IIPP) to protect employees from all worksite hazards, including infectious diseases. This guidance contains information, recommendations, and requirements for agricultural employers on how to update their IIPPs to include preventing the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace. This guidance does not introduce any new legal obligations, but because COVID-19 is widespread in the community, most California workplaces must consider the disease a workplace hazard.



Employee Training on COVID-19

Agricultural employers must provide training in a way that is readily understandable by all employees. Employees should be trained on the following topics:

- Information related to COVID-19 from the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**, including:
 - What COVID-19 is and **how it is spread**.
 - **Preventing the spread of COVID-19 if you are sick**.
 - **Symptoms of COVID-19 and when to seek medical attention**.
- Information from **California's COVID-19 Response Webpage** for additional resources, including ones in Spanish.
- The importance of frequent hand-washing with soap and water, including:
 - Following CDC guidelines to wash for at least 20 seconds.
 - When employees arrive at work and before they leave work.
 - Before and after eating or using the toilet.
 - After close interaction with other persons.
 - After contacting shared surfaces or tools.
- Before and after wearing masks or gloves.
- After blowing nose or sneezing.
- That hand sanitizer is not as effective as hand-washing but can be used as an interim measure if a hand-washing station is not immediately available.
- Methods to avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Coughing and sneezing etiquette, including covering a cough or sneeze with a tissue or a sleeve instead of a hand.
- Safely using cleaners and disinfectants on surfaces and objects, which includes:
 - Carefully following label directions.
 - Assessing the hazards of all cleaners and disinfectants used at the worksite.
 - Wearing personal protective equipment (such as gloves).
 - Ensuring cleaners and disinfectants are used in a manner that does not endanger employees.
- Limiting close contact with others as much as possible and maintaining safe physical distancing (see Physical Distancing information on next page).
- The importance of not coming to work if they have a frequent cough, fever, or difficulty breathing, or if they live with or have had close contact with someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19.

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- The employer’s plan and procedures to protect employees from COVID-19 illness.

Procedures to Help Prevent the Spread of COVID-19 at the Worksite

IIPP administrators should establish and implement the following procedures to help prevent the spread of COVID-19:

- Immediately send employees with acute respiratory illness symptoms home or to medical care as needed.
- Establish procedures to notify local health officials upon learning that someone has a COVID-19 infection. These officials will help employers determine a course of action.
- Encourage sick workers to stay home by not punishing them for missing work. Consider sick leave benefits to help prevent the spread among workers who might otherwise work out of economic necessity. Educate eligible employees on other benefits they can access if symptoms, illness, or caring for an ill family member prevents them from working. See [FAQs on laws enforced by the California Labor Commissioner’s Office](#) (questions 1 and 2).
- Make hand-washing stations more readily available and encourage their use. Employers are advised that hand-washing is compensable as nonproductive time for piece-rate workers (see [FAQs on piece-rate compensation](#)).
- Establish procedures to routinely clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces and objects (e.g., water containers, steering wheels, shared tools, shared work stations, door handles, seat belts, insides of toilet facilities) throughout the workday. These procedures should include:
 - Using products that are **EPA-approved** for use against the virus that causes COVID-19.
 - Providing EPA-registered disposable wipes for employees to wipe down commonly used surfaces before use.
 - Following the manufacturer’s instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., safety requirements, protective equipment, concentration, contact time).

- Ensuring there are adequate supplies to support cleaning and disinfection practices.

Procedures to Increase Physical Distancing

Physical distancing is an infection control measure that can stop or slow down the spread of an infectious disease by limiting contact between people. Safe physical distancing means maintaining a distance of at least six feet from other people. Agricultural employers should use the following physical distancing measures to stop or slow down the spread of COVID-19:

- Physical distancing should be practiced, whether outdoors, in vehicles, or in structures.
- Establish work practices and work stations, and adjust line speed and other processes to enable employees to maintain safe physical distancing while working.
- Stagger break and lunch times.
- Limit crew size by staggering work shifts or increasing the number of work shifts.
- Provide additional seating and shade structures to allow employees to take breaks while staying at least six feet apart.
- Encourage employees to avoid large gatherings and practice physical distancing during non-work hours. Employers who house workers are encouraged to be proactive in making physical distancing possible and to take affirmative steps to quarantine any housed worker exhibiting symptoms.
- Establish a location for receiving regular deliveries away from on-farm high-traffic areas and housing.
 - Place drop-boxes or drop-off locations near the road so vehicles do not need to enter the farm.

Health experts do not recommend the use of respirators by the general public or the general workforce for COVID-19. However, if available, employers should provide them to agricultural workers when needed to protect workers against excessive dust, *Coccidioides* fungus (the source of Valley Fever), or other harmful agents.

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- Create specific instructions for deliveries.
 - Provide suppliers and customers with the location of and all the procedures to be used at the drop-off point.
 - Create signage to easily identify drop-off points. Include contact information on the signs to assist with questions leading up to delivery and upon arrival.

Good Sanitation Practices

Agricultural employers must ensure bathrooms and hand-washing facilities are readily accessible to all employees at all times.

- Restrooms must be clean and sanitary.
- Hand-washing facilities must be located at or near the restrooms.
- Soap or other suitable cleansing agent and single-use towels must be provided.
- Additional hand-washing supplies should be placed as close to work areas as possible to allow for frequent hand-washing.
- Enough time must be allowed for frequent hand-washing.
- Due to increased hand-washing, the employer should frequently check the supply of soap, paper towels, and toilet paper, and replenish them before they run out.

Additional COVID-19 Resources for Agricultural Employers

Agricultural Employers

- California Department of Public Health. [**Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) and the Food Supply Chain**](#)
- Oregon Department of Agriculture. [**Effective Disinfectants to Help Prevent the Spread of Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\) on Food Contact Surfaces**](#)
- Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture. [**COVID-19 Guidance: Farm and Farm Deliveries General Information**](#)
- [**California Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Response**](#)
- California Division of Occupational Safety and Health. [**Cal/OSHA Interim Guidelines for General Industry on 2019 Novel Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\)**](#)
- California Labor and Workforce Development Agency. [**Coronavirus 2019 \(COVID-19\) Resources for Employers and Workers**](#)
- [**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\)**](#)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [**Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\): Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers**](#)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [**Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\): Symptoms**](#)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [**Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\): How It Spreads**](#)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [**Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\): Steps to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 if you are sick**](#)
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. [**Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2**](#) (the virus that causes COVID-19)

