Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) interim guidance for agricultural employers in Oregon

Contents

Introduction .............................................................................................................................. 2

For Employers of Agricultural Workers ................................................................................. 2

Stay Informed ......................................................................................................................... 2

Physical Distancing Policy ...................................................................................................... 2

Training for Employees .......................................................................................................... 3

Resources and Protection for Workers ................................................................................... 3

Infection Prevention Recommendations ................................................................................. 4

Agricultural Workplaces ......................................................................................................... 4

Physical Distancing ................................................................................................................ 4

Sanitation and Hygiene .......................................................................................................... 5

Preventive Actions .................................................................................................................. 5

Worksite Disinfectants ............................................................................................................ 5

Worker and Supervisor Education .......................................................................................... 6

Employer-Provided Transportation ......................................................................................... 6

COVID-19 in the Workplace ................................................................................................... 7

Support for Sick Employees .................................................................................................. 8

Employer-Provided Housing to Domestic and/or H-2A Visa Workers ......................... 9

Housing for workers with symptoms of COVID-19 ............................................................... 10

Appendix A ............................................................................................................................. 11

Appendix B ............................................................................................................................. 15
Introduction

On March 23, 2020 Governor Kate Brown issued Executive Order (EO) 20-12 “Stay Home. Save Lives.” to support the health and safety of all Oregonians. EO 20-12 establishes workplace restrictions for employees who cannot work at home. All businesses, including agricultural businesses, should implement and enforce physical distancing policies, consistent with guidance from the Oregon Health Authority (OHA). These prevention measures provided by the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) and Oregon Occupational Health and Safety Division (OSHA) can help agricultural work in Oregon proceed safely.

Studies show the COVID-19 virus spreads easily from person to person when people gather and work in close proximity, including housing facilities for farm workers. As Oregon begins to increase seasonal agricultural activities, farm owners and supervisors, including those who provide housing or transportation for farm workers, need to ensure all physical distancing guidelines and workplace safety measures are followed. Open communication and feedback from employees are critical to providing a safe work environment for permanent and seasonal employees.

The following recommendations for agricultural employment, housing and transportation are intended to reduce transmission of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). This guidance applies to all workers, including H-2A visa holders, domestic and temporary worker types.

People older than 65 and people with medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, chronic lung disease, chronic heart disease, high blood pressure, or a compromised immune system (e.g., cancer or treatments that suppress the immune system) are at increased risk for severe illness including respiratory failure and death from COVID-19.

People with no pre-existing conditions can also get COVID-19. People can have COVID-19 without having symptoms, and they can still spread the virus to others.

For Employers of Agricultural Workers

Stay Informed

Agricultural employers can help prevent the spread of COVID-19 among agricultural workers by staying informed about current COVID-19 information, including state and local information. The OHA website for COVID-19 is http://healthoregon.org/coronavirus.

Physical Distancing Policy

Develop a physical distancing policy and train supervisors and employees on this policy. Key components of your policy should include:

- Appoint a Physical Distancing Officer to ensure physical distancing is maintained.
- Maintain a distance of six feet between people (physical distancing) to avoid spreading illness during work activities and breaks.
- Limit personal contact and groups when using common facilities at any one time.
- When possible, implement alternative spacing of people while harvesting and processing to increase the distance between employees.
- Extend policy to provided housing with additional guidance below.
Training for Employees

Provide training for all employees, including supervisors, foremen and camp operators overseeing labor housing, on:

- Following these guidelines and your established physical distancing policy.
- COVID-19 prevention. See the Appendix A, “Resources for Agricultural Employers” for links to videos, posters, and other materials to help educate employees about this illness.
- Appropriate hand washing, hygiene practices, and sanitation processes while at work. See Appendix A for resources.
- Materials should be provided in the language understood by the employee whenever possible.

Resources and Protection for Workers

All employees have the right to a safe and healthy work environment. Additionally, employers can encourage employees to access resources that will help them stay healthy.

- Consider helping employees in accessing assistance programs, community resources, and local health care resources that provide free or low-cost care.
- Allow community partners to provide on-site and/or phone outreach to workers per ORS 659A.253.
- Provide a list of healthcare facilities where employees with respiratory illness can seek appropriate care as needed. Identify healthcare facilities in your area that provide free or low-cost care; you may ask your local public health authority for assistance identifying them if needed.
- Consider allowing workers to report safety and health concerns without being identified. If they have the choice to do this anonymously, they will be more likely to reach out and report incidents that they have experienced or observed. One such reporting process is available through Oregon OSHA. The online form allows workers to report concerns or complaints about employers’ compliance with COVID-19 workplace restrictions: https://www4.cbs.state.or.us/exs/osha/hazrep/
- Under the Oregon Safe Employment Act, employers may not take any adverse action such as firing, demoting, or otherwise retaliating against a worker they suspect of exercising safety and health rights such as raising safety and health concerns to their employer, participating in union activities concerning safety and health matters, filing a safety and health complaint or participating in an Oregon OSHA investigation.
- Like all workers, migrant and seasonal farmworkers and other agricultural workers have the right to a safe work environment. The employer must follow all applicable workplace health and safety rules administered by Oregon OSHA and the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industry (BOLI). See Oregon Administrative Rules, Chapter 437 and 839.
Infection Prevention Recommendations

Minimize the risk of exposure to COVID-19 in your workplace by:

- Continuing to follow Oregon OSHA’s Sanitation rules for agriculture (OAR 437, Division 4 Agriculture, Subdivision J, Work Environment), which include recently adopted temporary rules specific to COVID-19.

- Ensuring bathrooms and handwashing facilities are consistently stocked with potable water, soap and disposable drying materials for handwashing. Provide access to tissues, trash bins, and plastic bags for the proper disposal of used tissues and other personal care products.

- Cleaning and sanitizing all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace at least twice per day. Give special attention to 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.

- Adhering to physical distancing recommendations in the workplace (at least six feet between people where possible). This includes transportation between and around work areas as well as company-provided transportation.

- Avoid sharing tools, gloves, equipment, and other employer provided gear.

- Support any disease monitoring efforts undertaken by the local public health authority or community health center.

- Do not ask individuals with symptoms of respiratory illness (fever, cough, shortness of breath) to report to work.

- A list of practical suggestions for agricultural workplaces to reduce the spread of illness is included in Appendix B.

Agricultural Workplaces

Employers have a responsibility to provide a safe workplace to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Businesses must have clear policies that are provided to and followed by everyone at work. This section provides additional guidance to agricultural employers.

Physical Distancing

- Limit the number of employees working in indoor or outdoor areas to facilitate physical distancing.

- Physical distancing should be maintained at all times, including in transportation, lunch times and breaks. The recommended distance between people is at least six feet.

- Rotate breaks and lunches to allow for more physical distancing and use of the bathroom and sink facilities.
Sanitation and Hygiene

- Ensure workers’ ability to access sanitation facilities often and not just during their breaks.
- Provide signs and discuss verbally information about:
  - Washing hands after coughing, sneezing, restroom use
  - Washing hands before eating
  - Avoiding touching face, eyes, nose or mouth
- Signs are available on the OHA and CDC websites. Links are available in Appendix A.
- Provide this information in English, Spanish and any other prevalent language spoken by the workers.

Preventive Actions

- Emphasize everyday preventive actions through strong, consistent messages to your employees, your supervisors and visitors to your business.
  - If the presence of visitors cannot be avoided, it is advised to maintain a record of all visitors.
- Encourage workers to wear cloth face coverings consistently and provide opportunities to change and clean face coverings regularly.
  - Clearly communicate to workers and supervisors that face coverings should be used in conjunction with, not instead of, physical distancing measures.
  - Contact your county emergency manager for assistance if you are unable to obtain face coverings through your usual vendors.
- Consider screening employees for illness at the start of each shift. Ask if they are feeling well and identify those who report symptoms of respiratory illness (fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath).
- If a worker reports symptoms, follow the recommendations below in the section titled “Support for Sick Employees.”

Worksite Disinfectants

Employers can take steps to facilitate good health practices on the worksite.

- Continue to follow Oregon OSHA’s Sanitation rules for agriculture (OAR 437, Division 4 Agriculture, Subdivision J, Work Environment), which include recently adopted temporary rules specific to COVID-19.
- Make sure that workers have access to these supplies at the worksite, in common areas, in bathrooms, and where they eat:
  - In addition to providing handwashing facilities, provide hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol, if available. Hand sanitizer may be used in addition to appropriate handwashing with soap and water. Soap and water are needed any time hands are visibly soiled.
  - Provide a disinfectant that is active against emerging viral pathogens and human coronaviruses to those who sanitize counters, bathrooms and other workplace areas.

- Provide supplies to prevent the spread of COVID-19 like water, soap, disposable drying materials, alcohol-based hand sanitizer, tissues and lined trash cans, and replenish these supplies as needed throughout the day. Contact your county emergency manager for assistance if there are issues obtaining these supplies through your usual vendors.

**Worker and Supervisor Education**

COVID-19 is a new illness. Employers should instruct workers, supervisors, and foremen about the illness and how to protect themselves. Instruction should occur in any language used to communicate with workers. Resources to help you do this are included in Appendix A.

- Educate workers and supervisors about hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.
- Provide information to employees about benefits that may be available to them such as childcare and nutrition assistance.
- Allow your workers to engage with community-based service providers per ORS 659A.253.

**Employer-Provided Transportation**

The recommendations below are intended to help limit the spread of respiratory illness in employer-provided transportation.

If you use a labor contractor to recruit, solicit, employ, supply, transport or provide lodging of migrant and seasonal farmworkers in connection with employment with your establishment, ensure that these contractors and their agents are also following these steps when they are providing transportation from home to the place of employment or in between sites.

- **Passenger vehicle:** Limit riders to maintain three feet of separation between passengers
- **Van/bus:** Maintain the minimum six (6) feet physical distance from other riders and driver, or three feet if six feet is not possible.
- **Company vehicle:** Limit the number of people per vehicle to maintain the recommended distances.
- Practice and promote good hygiene in vehicles.
  - Provide handwashing opportunities before entering or use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.
  - Cover your coughs and sneezes in the bend of your arm or with a tissue, then throw the tissue away in an enclosed trash basket in the vehicle or once you leave the vehicle.
  - Do not spit.
  - Workers must cover their nose and mouth with a cloth face covering or clean bandana while sharing a ride.
  - All high-contact surfaces (door handles, seatbelt buckles, armrests, steering wheel, etc.) must be sanitized before each trip, or at least twice each day when in continuous use.
COVID-19 in the Workplace

Should an employee show COVID-19 symptoms such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath while at work or has a household member who is symptomatic, they should not come to work and should be sent home. Be aware that a person who is ill may present some, all or none of these symptoms.

Employers should update employees on sick leave policy both provided and mandated. Encourage employees to be forthcoming about COVID-19 symptoms. Under no circumstances is workplace discrimination or violation of privacy law allowed. (See OAR 839, Division 5, Discrimination.)

If a worker starts having symptoms of COVID-19 while on the job:

- Have the employee stop working immediately and isolate from others. Instruct them to wash their hands and wear a face covering.
- Collect information on the employee’s work location, hours, general and specific duties. This information will help guide where to clean and inform coworkers.
- Assist employee in contacting a medical provider and following the direction and guidance of the relevant health department regarding specific quarantine requirements.
- Be transparent with other employees and encourage increased safety and cleaning measures.
- Ensure that sick employees do not share eating areas and bathrooms with healthy workers.
- Follow the steps below to help workers seek medical care safely and clean areas and vehicles where they have been.

Establish a process for deep cleaning after any worker leaves the workplace with a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19. Suggested steps include:

- Provide masks and gloves to those performing deep cleaning.
- Close off areas used by the person who is sick.
- Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the area.
- Wait 24 hours before you clean or disinfect (people should not be in the area during this time). If 24 hours is not feasible, wait as long as possible.
- Sanitize all areas used by the person who is sick, including bathrooms, common areas, shared equipment, etc.
- Wipe all accessible surfaces and common touch surfaces in the area (door handles, light switches, etc.) using disinfectants registered for use in Oregon and follow the instructions on the label to ensure safe and effective use of the product.
- Clean up any visible soiling including any smears or streaks
- Do not allow others into the area until cleaning is complete unless absolutely necessary.
Support for Sick Employees

Screening for Illness

Ask incoming workers if they have symptoms of COVID-19 such as fever, cough or shortness of breath at the beginning of their shift and before returning to employer-provided housing.

- If they have fever, cough or lower respiratory illness:
  - House them in a separate area designated for sick people at no cost to the worker (this separation pertains to laundry, cooking and eating areas and bathrooms as well)
  - Provide a sanitary face mask to the worker and instruct them how to put it on to cover their nose and mouth
  - If a mask is not available, provide tissues or a bandana to cover the nose and mouth. See Appendix A for information on cloth face coverings.
  - Assist them in contacting a medical provider.

Medical Care

Let sick employees know that seeking care is in their best interest and that the employer is prepared to assist.

- Call a medical provider in advance so health care workers can take appropriate precautionary measures and arrange for language assistance as necessary.
- Workers with symptoms of respiratory illness should be encouraged to follow their doctor’s recommendations.
  - If this includes coming into a clinic, take a private vehicle to get to the medical provider and wear a mask or cloth face covering for the entire ride and into the health facility.
  - If they do not have their own vehicle, facilitate transportation. If assistance is needed, please contact your local public health authority for assistance in facilitating transportation to the provider.
  - Communicate clearly to workers that seeking care is in their best interest and that the employer is prepared to assist.
  - Circulate air outside by partially lowering windows (weather permitting).
  - Remember to call 911 right away if emergency services are needed.

Recovery

- If the sick person resides in provided housing, ensure food and water are provided as they will not be able to go to the store and may not have any funds to buy their own.
- Public health officials will provide instructions about isolation of the sick person and when they may discontinue isolation.
- Before an employee who has been sick returns to work, verify the following:
  - They have had no fever for at least 72 hours (without the use of medicine that reduces fevers); AND
• Other symptoms have improved (for example, when cough or shortness of breath have improved); AND
• At least seven days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

Others Who May Be Exposed
Because COVID-19 can spread easily from person to person, it is important to identify those who may have been exposed to someone who is showing symptoms of illness.

• Create a plan in case a cluster of workers complain of illness at the same time.
• Identify those who may have been exposed to the individual showing symptoms.
• Help them access testing for COVID-19. Ask your local public health authority for assistance if needed.
• If they reside in employer-provided housing, allow them to be quarantined in separate sleeping areas designated for isolation until the results of their tests are available.
• If the person showing symptoms is confirmed to have COVID-19, your local public health authority will conduct contact tracing to identify close contacts of the sick person and will provide guidance on quarantine for those exposed.
• Instruct workers and household members who had close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 patient to self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 (fever and onset of respiratory symptoms such as cough or shortness of breath) for 14 days. Non-touch thermometers should be used to measure the temperatures of sick workers twice per day, once in the morning and afternoon. Contact your county emergency manager if you are unable to obtain such thermometers.

Employer-Provided Housing to Domestic and/or H-2A Visa Workers
Employers providing housing to domestic workers or H-2A visa holders should follow the same precautions outlined above as required for all workers.

• Continue to follow Oregon OSHA Administrative Rules (which includes recently adopted temporary rules specific to COVID-19) – found in Division 4 Agriculture, Subdivision J, Work Environment, which requires sanitary facilities and supplies at the worksite, in common areas, restrooms, sleeping quarters and all common-use cooking and eating areas
• Ensure bathrooms and handwashing facilities are consistently stocked with potable water, soap and disposable drying materials for handwashing. Provide access to tissues, trash bins, and plastic bags for the proper disposal of used tissues and other personal care products.
• Post instructional posters and fact sheets, in appropriate languages, in communal areas and bathrooms to educate employees about proper hand hygiene and symptoms of COVID-19.
• Make sure that workers have access to sanitary facilities and supplies at the worksite, in common areas, restrooms, sleeping quarters and all common-use cooking and eating areas. In addition to handwashing supplies such as soap and water, provide and encourage the use of hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol, if available.
• Disinfectants active against the emerging viral pathogens and human coronaviruses should be used to sanitize counters, bathrooms, doorknobs, eating surfaces, and other high touch areas. 

• Sanitize common-use areas at least twice a day.

• When workers are provided housing in connection with employment, employers are required to provide laundry trays, tubs or machines in the ratio of 1 for each 30 occupants (OAR 437, Division 4 Agriculture, Subdivision J, Agricultural Labor Housing and Related Facilities). Examine the capacity of your washing and drying areas for the worker capacity at your site. Consider adding additional wash tubs and washer and dryers as needed to ensure workers can have ready access to clean clothing and clean face coverings.

• When workers are provided housing in connection with employment, ensure that you have a plan that includes home isolation and dedicated facilities for sleeping, cooking/eating, showering, and toilet areas for those who test positive for COVID-19.

Housing for workers with symptoms of COVID-19

• People with symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g., fever or cough or shortness of breath) must be provided with separate living accommodations at no cost, including separate sleeping rooms, dedicated laundry, cooking and eating areas and bathrooms from people who are asymptomatic. If assistance is needed complying with this, please contact your local public health authority.

• People who are taking care of others with COVID-19 must be provided with respiratory protection, if available. Sanitary facemasks, if available, should be worn by sick people when they are outside of their room or when other people are in their room. If appropriate respirators or facemasks cannot be obtained, simple cloth face coverings should be used.

• Ventilate the room where persons with COVID-19 are housed on regular intervals.

• Post signs in English and any other languages spoken by the workers encouraging frequent hand washing and hand sanitizing. Make water, soap, hand sanitizer, and cleaning supplies readily available.

• Place housing outside of the Application Exclusion Zone, if possible. If housing for sick workers located outside of an Application Exclusion Zone does not exist or separation of sick workers is not possible due to a lack of capacity, work with state and local public health to identify other options.

• You should identify additional housing within your local areas and have these options identified before you open your labor housing, and communicate promptly if you anticipate help will be needed to identify this housing.
Appendix A

Resources for Agricultural Employers

Information about COVID-19

- Governor Kate Brown: COVID-19 Resources for Oregonians
  - https://govstatus.egov.com/or-covid-19

- Oregon Health Authority COVID-19 Information

- Oregon Office of Emergency Management COVID-19 Response
  - https://www.oregon.gov/covid19response/Pages/default.aspx

- 211 COVID-19 information resource. Note they also provide assistance in Spanish.
  - https://covid19.211info.org/

- Safe + Strong: COVID-19 Resources in 12 languages
  - www.safestrongoregon.org

State and Federal Agencies

- Oregon Department of Agriculture

- Oregon OSHA

- Federal OSHA

- Oregon Office of Emergency Management
  - Directory of local emergency managers:

Cleaning

- Oregon Department of Agriculture
  - Updated list of disinfectants to be used to eliminate virus from surfaces
Educational Materials for Supervisors and Workers

From the Oregon Health Authority

- Social or physical distancing flyer
  - Spanish https://sharedsystems.dhsoha.state.or.us/DHSForms/Served/ls2268.pdf
  - English https://sharedsystems.dhsoha.state.or.us/DHSForms/Served/le2268.pdf

- Novel coronavirus fact sheet
  - Spanish https://sharedsystems.dhsoha.state.or.us/DHSForms/Served/LS2356.pdf
  - English https://sharedsystems.dhsoha.state.or.us/DHSForms/Served/LE2356.pdf

- Prevention flyer
  - Spanish https://sharedsystems.dhsoha.state.or.us/DHSForms/Served/LS2681.pdf
  - English https://sharedsystems.dhsoha.state.or.us/DHSForms/Served/LE2681.pdf

- Don’t touch your face flyer
  - Spanish https://sharedsystems.dhsoha.state.or.us/DHSForms/Served/ls2257.pdf
  - English https://sharedsystems.dhsoha.state.or.us/DHSForms/Served/le2257.pdf

- Videos (Spanish)
  - How to protect against COVID-19 / Como protegernos del COVID-19
    https://youtu.be/WMrnn54skQI
  - Myths and truths about COVID-19 / Mitos y verdades sobre el COVID-19
    https://youtu.be/FtcWoYEViIk

- Video (Mam)
  - COVID-19 information https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=G5jVv301sQ0

From the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Handwashing and Hygiene

- Video: Handwashing
  - English https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/videos.html
  - Spanish https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/esp/videos.html

- Resources: Handwashing (English and Spanish)
  https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/materials.html

- Poster: Stop the spread of germs
Create A Plan

- COVID-19: Get your home ready. Use this guide to create a household plan and keep your family and community safe.

Cloth Face Coverings

- Website: Cloth face coverings
- Fact sheet: How to make and wear a cloth face covering
- Video: How to make a cloth face covering
  - English https://youtu.be/tPx1yqvJgf4

If You Are Sick

- Fact sheet: What to do if you are sick

Information in Indigenous Languages

Mixteco

- Monterey County Health Department public service announcement video https://youtu.be/s2yw9FOYXH0

Akateko


Mam

- Oregon Health Authority COVID-19 information https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=G5jVv301sQ0
- Government of Guatemala COVID-19 prevention campaign https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=G5jVv301sQ0

Triqui

- Monterey County Health Department public service announcement video https://youtu.be/I4dAdfkrS8w
Zapoteco

- Health Service of Oaxaca, Mexico COVID-19 information video
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KN7LVJWQbfQ

Purepecha

- Government of Michoacan, Mexico COVID-19 information video
  https://youtu.be/LplfWtIGL58

Health Resources

- Oregon Local Public Health Authority directory
  - https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/PROVIDERPARTNERRESOURCES/LOCALHEALTHDEPARTMENTRESOURCES/Pages/lhd.aspx

- Oregon Primary Care Association- Oregon’s Community Health Centers
  - https://www.orpca.org/chc/find-a-chc

- National Center for Farmworker Health, Inc.

- Pan-American Health Organization – Information on COVID-19 in Spanish
  - https://www.paho.org/es
Appendix B

Practical Suggestions for Reducing the Spread of COVID-19

The following practical suggestions for agricultural workplaces may help reduce the spread of illness at the worksite.

- Pay special attention to areas where workers typically gather, such as the lines for weighing products.
- You may want to increase the number of checkers to move workers through the line more quickly and avoid crowds.
- Make sure that all trays, containers, cartons are cleaned regularly as these are rotated daily among workers.
- Provide additional handwashing sinks near the checkers at the end of lines, so workers can wash their hands before going back to the field again.
- Provide for a table that can be cleaned outside the door of any toilet or sink facilities, so the workers can put their equipment on the table while using the facilities. Clean these surfaces multiple times each day.
- Display signs in rest rooms and near sinks explaining that the workers can tell their supervisors if the water in the reserve for the handwashing sink is running low. The water does not need to be left running while handwashing.
- Allow all workers to sanitize their employee identification cards after check-in and throughout the day if they are handled by the checker and the workers.
- Provide alcohol-based wipes to workers while they are handling their cell phones during breaks or lunch.

You can get this document in other languages, large print, braille or a format you prefer. Contact the Oregon Health Authority Incident Management Team at ORESF8.OHALiaison@dhsoha.state.or.us.