




## COVID-19


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# Agriculture Workers and Employers

Interim Guidance from CDC and the U.S. Department of Labor

Updated June 11, 2021




The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) provides resources to assist employers and workers identify COVID-19 exposure risks and help them take appropriate steps to prevent exposure and infection. See the OSHA [Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\) topic page](#)  for the most current requirements, guidance, and tools.

### Find the Latest Information:

- [Protecting Workers: Guidance on Mitigating and Preventing the Spread of COVID-19 in the Workplace](#) 

This joint guidance for COVID-19 may be adapted by [state and local health departments](#) to respond to rapidly changing local circumstances.

## Key Points

- Management in the agriculture industry should conduct [work site assessments](#)  to identify coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) risks and infection prevention strategies to protect workers.
- Work site guidance for COVID-19 prevention and control should be taken into consideration in employer-furnished shared worker housing, transportation vehicles and work settings.
- Prevention practices should follow the [hierarchy of controls](#), which includes using source control and a combination of engineering controls, administrative controls (especially proper sanitation, cleaning, and disinfection), and personal protective equipment.
- Grouping workers together into cohorts may reduce the spread of COVID-19 transmission in the workplace by minimizing the number of different individuals who come into close contact with each other over the course of a week, and may also reduce the number of workers quarantined because of exposure to the virus.
- Owners/operators should maximize opportunities to place farmworkers residing together in the same vehicles for transportation and in the same cohorts to limit exposure.
- Basic information and training about infection prevention should be provided to all farmworkers in [languages](#) they can understand.
- Agriculture work sites developing plans for continuing operations where COVID-19 is spreading among workers or in the surrounding community should work directly with appropriate [state and local public](#)

[health](#) officials and occupational safety and health professionals.

## Summary of Recent Changes

Update as of February 2, 2021





Added bullet about requirement of masks on public transportation conveyances and transportation hubs.

### Who this guidance is for: All agriculture workers and their employers.

Farm operations vary across regions of the country. This guidance provides a template of action to protect agriculture workers from coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). Agricultural employers can adapt these recommendations to protect workers at their particular work sites or in specific work operations.

**Purpose:** Agriculture work sites, shared worker housing, and shared worker transportation vehicles present unique challenges for preventing and controlling the spread of COVID-19. Consistent application of specific preparation, prevention, and management measures can help reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19.

Workers on farms, ranches, and other production agriculture work sites are considered [critical infrastructure workers within the Food and Agriculture Sector](#)  . All agriculture work sites should follow, as feasible, relevant aspects of CDC guidance, including but not limited to this document, CDC's [Critical Infrastructure Guidance](#), and guidance from regulatory bodies such as the Food and Drug Administration, as needed. Additionally, they should work directly with appropriate state and local public health officials and occupational safety and health professionals.

This interim guidance is based on what is currently known about COVID-19. CDC and the U.S. Department of Labor will update this guidance as needed and as additional information becomes available. Please check the [CDC COVID-19 website](#) periodically for updated guidance.

## Background

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness caused by a new virus called SARS-CoV-2. [Symptoms](#) often include a fever, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, muscle pain, sore throat, or new loss of taste and smell.

Workers who may be [at higher risk for severe illness](#) include older adults and people of any age with certain underlying [medical conditions](#) like chronic kidney disease, obesity, diabetes, or serious heart conditions. Policies and procedures addressing issues related to workers at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 should be made in consultation with licensed healthcare and human resource professionals.

The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person:

- Between people who are in close contact with one another ([within about 6 feet](#)).
- Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks.

Recent studies indicate that people who are not showing symptoms can spread the virus. It may also be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes. This is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads, but we are still learning more about this virus. Based on the limited information available to date, the [risk of animals spreading COVID-19 to people is considered to be low](#).



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## Exposure risk among agriculture workers and employers

There is no evidence that livestock, crops, or products that may be handled by workers involved in production agriculture are sources of COVID-19 infection. However, close contact with coworkers may contribute to spreading the virus among workers.

Distinctive factors that affect farmworkers' risk for COVID-19 in production agriculture workplaces include:

- **Distance between workers** – farmworkers often have close contact to one another both in the fields and indoors. Workers may also be near one another at other times, such as when clocking in or out, during breaks, when sharing transportation, or in shared housing.
- **Duration of contact** – farmworkers often have prolonged close contact with coworkers, both on the work site and during transportation and in some housing. Continued contact with potentially infectious individuals increases the risk of COVID-19 transmission.
- **Type of contact** – farmworkers may be exposed to COVID-19 through respiratory droplets in the air—for example, when workers who have the virus cough, sneeze, or talk. Exposure could also occur when workers have contact with contaminated surfaces or objects, such as tools, equipment, tractors, workstations, toilet facilities, or break room tables and then touch their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes. This is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads, but we are still learning more about how this virus spreads.
- **Other factors that may increase risk among some workers include:**
  - Sharing transportation such as ride-share vans or shuttle vehicles, car-pools, and public transportation.
  - Living in employer-furnished housing and sharing living quarters, cooking and eating areas, bathrooms, and laundry facilities with fellow workers.
  - Living in crowded and multigenerational housing.
  - Contact within their households/families and with fellow workers in community settings in areas with ongoing community transmission.
  - Mobility of the workforce (i.e., migrant workers) who, in moving from farm to farm, can potentially spread the virus between communities.
  - Poor access to clean water for hygiene purposes throughout the day.

## Create a COVID-19 assessment and control plan

Farm owners and operators can prevent and [slow the spread of COVID-19](#). Owners/operators should develop a COVID-19 assessment and control plan to protect themselves and farmworkers, in accordance with the [CDC Interim Business Guidance for Businesses and Employees](#) and [General Business Frequently Asked Questions](#). [State](#) and [local health departments](#)  may also provide resources to aid in the development of these plans. Owners/operators can respond in flexible ways to varying levels of disease transmission in the community and be prepared to refine their control plans as needed. A control plan should reflect the specific region, work site space, job tasks, and other features of each farm, ranch, orchard, or other agricultural operations and locations. Those involved in the work can best set priorities and assess how realistic these recommendations are for specific situations at their facilities.

Owners/operators should designate a qualified workplace coordinator who will be responsible for COVID-19 assessment and control planning. All workers should know how to contact the identified coordinator with any COVID-19 concerns, and the coordinator should handle such

### Agricultural Employer Checklist

#### Agricultural Employer Checklist for Creating a COVID-19 Assessment and Control Plan

To prevent and slow the spread of COVID-19, agricultural employers can use this checklist to create a COVID-19 assessment and control plan for applying specific preparation, prevention, and management measures. This checklist has been developed based on the [Agriculture Workers and Employers Interim Guidance from CDC and the U.S. Department of Labor](#).

This checklist has five sections:

- **Section 1:** Assessment
- **Section 2:** Control Plan based on the Hierarchy of Controls
  - Screening and Monitoring Workers
  - Managing Sick Workers
  - Addressing Return to Work after Worker Exposure to COVID-19
  - Engineering Controls
  - Cleaning, Disinfection, and Sanitation
  - Administrative Controls
  - Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- **Section 3:** Special Considerations for Shared Housing
- **Section 4:** Special Considerations for Shared Transportation
- **Section 5:** Special Considerations for Children

This checklist can be used to reassess, update, and modify your assessment and control plan on a regular basis or as conditions change.

concerns confidentially, as appropriate. The workplace coordinator should have a means to communicate in the preferred languages spoken or read by the workers, if possible, and provide [materials](#) at the appropriate literacy level. Farmworkers should also be provided with contact information about where to get COVID-19 testing.



COVID-19

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The workplace coordinators and management need to follow all applicable federal, state, and local regulations and should be aware of the evolving nature of recommendations regarding worker safety and health during the COVID-19 pandemic. Work site assessments to identify COVID-19 risks and prevention strategies should be done periodically as part of sound occupational health and public health practice.

## Control plan

Recommendations for worker infection prevention are based on an approach known as the [hierarchy of controls](#). This approach groups actions by their likely effectiveness in reducing or removing hazards. In most cases, the preferred approach is to eliminate a hazard or hazardous processes (e.g. exclude sick workers and visitors), install feasible [engineering controls](#), and implement appropriate protocols for [cleaning, disinfection and sanitation](#) to further reduce exposure or shield farmworkers. Until such controls are in place, or if they are not effective, other [administrative control](#) measures and [personal protective equipment \(PPE\)](#) will be needed.

## Screening and monitoring workers

Consider screening farmworkers for COVID-19 signs and symptoms (e.g., temperature checks).<sup>[1]</sup> Uniform policies and procedures for screening workers should be developed in consultation with state and local health officials and occupational medicine professionals. Possible options to screen workers for COVID-19 symptoms could include:

- Screening prior to entry into the work site, or if possible, before boarding shared transportation.
- Asking workers in appropriate languages if they have had a fever (or feelings of feverishness), respiratory symptoms, or [other symptoms](#) in the past 24 hours.
- Checking temperatures of workers at the start of each shift to identify anyone with a fever of 100.4°F or greater (or reported feelings of feverishness).
- Do not let employees enter the workplace if they have a fever of 100.4°F or greater (or reported feeling of feverishness), or if screening results indicate that the worker is suspected of having COVID-19-like symptoms (see managing sick workers below).
- Encouraging workers to report symptoms immediately, when onsite.
- Encouraging workers who have symptoms to self-isolate and contact a healthcare provider, or when appropriate, providing them with access to direct medical care or telemedicine. Also:
  - Coordinating any recommended diagnostic testing with the occupational medicine provider, or state and local public health officials.
  - Providing them with [information on when it is safe to return to work](#) along with the operation's return-to-work policies and procedures.
  - Informing human resources, health unit (if in place), and supervisor (so worker can be moved off schedule during illness and a replacement can be assigned, if available).

Ensure that personnel performing screening activities, including temperature checks, are appropriately protected from exposure to potentially infectious workers entering the facility by:

- Training temperature screeners to use temperature monitors according to manufacturer instructions.
- Using temperature monitors that are accurate under conditions of use (such as extreme hot/cold weather temperatures).
- Protecting the screener through the use of social distancing, barrier or partition controls, and personal protective equipment (PPE). However, reliance on PPE alone is a less effective control and is more difficult to implement, given PPE shortages and training requirements.



- See the “Should we be screening employees for COVID-19 symptoms?” section of [General Business Frequently Asked Questions](#) as a guide.
- If temperature screeners need to be within 6 feet of workers, providing them with appropriate PPE:
  - Such PPE should include gloves, a gown, a face shield, and, at a minimum, a facemask. See OSHA’s PPE standards at [29 CFR 1910 Subpart I](#) .
  - Train employees on how to properly put on, take off, and dispose of all PPE.
  - Filtering facepiece respirators, such as N95s, may be appropriate for workers performing screening duties. If respirators are needed, they must be used in the context of a comprehensive respiratory protection program that includes medical evaluation, fit testing, and training in accordance with OSHA’s Respiratory Protection standard ([29 CFR 1910.134](#) [↗](#) ). [\[2\]](#)

## Managing sick workers

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, or—when they can’t be isolated in their existing housing arrangement—placed in alternative housing arrangements under quarantine away from other workers. (Note: employers should consult [DOL](#) [↗](#) and [DHS](#) [↗](#) regulations and/or guidance for any additional requirements or obligations concerning temporary foreign workers under the H-2A program).

Since we don’t know for sure which animals can be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19, sick workers should stay away from animals, including livestock and pets, during their illness. Sick workers should be provided with informational resources to access medical attention should they need it. One such resource may be the [Health Resources and Services Administration \(HRSA\) website](#) [↗](#) which identifies HRSA-funded health centers. These health centers can assess whether a patient needs further evaluation, which may be done over the phone or using telehealth. Individuals may also receive primary health care services at their local health center at a reduced cost or free of charge depending on their economic status. Most people with COVID-19 will have mild illness and can recover at home.

Ensure that personnel managing sick employees are provided with appropriate PPE and training. For personnel who need to be within 6 feet of a sick colleague, follow the same PPE considerations listed for screeners above and consult OSHA’s PPE standards at [29 CFR 1910 Subpart I](#) [↗](#) .

If a worker is confirmed to have COVID-19, owners/operators should consider ways to inform anyone at the work site, to the extent it is reasonably knowable, who has been in sustained, close contact (within 6 feet) with that worker of their possible exposure to COVID-19 based on the [CDC Public Health Recommendations for Community-Related Exposure](#). However, the owners/operators should protect the infected worker’s confidentiality and not identify them, as required by the [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#). [↗](#)

If a worker becomes or reports being sick, [clean and disinfect](#) the work area, equipment, common areas used (break areas, bathrooms, vehicles, etc.), and any tools handled by the symptomatic worker. If a worker is in employer-furnished housing, consider providing a dedicated space for the worker to recover away from others, and then clean and disinfect living quarters, cooking and eating areas, bathrooms, and laundry facilities. Do not allow other workers to use these areas until they have been cleaned and disinfected. A worker going to a home in the community [can be provided with guidance](#) [📄](#) to mitigate risk of transmission in the home.

Owners/operators should work with state, tribal, local, and territorial (STLT) health officials to facilitate the identification of other exposed and potentially exposed individuals, such as coworkers. Facilities should work with STLT officials to consider the appropriate role for [testing](#) and [workplace contact tracing](#) (i.e., identifying person-to-person spread) after a worker tests positive for COVID-19.

On-site healthcare personnel, such as facility nurses or emergency medical technicians, should follow appropriate CDC and OSHA protective guidance for [healthcare](#) and [emergency response](#) personnel.

## Addressing return to work after worker exposure to COVID-19

- Employers should follow [CDC's Critical Infrastructure Guidance](#) for workers who have had a COVID-19 exposure but remain free of symptoms.
- Critical infrastructure employers have an obligation to manage the continuation of work in a way that best protects the health of their workers and the general public. Employers can use strategies from [CDC's COVID-19 Critical Infrastructure Sector Response Planning](#).
- When workers return who have had COVID-19, including those workers who have tested positive for COVID-19 but remained free of symptoms, to onsite operations, employers should follow the [CDC interim guidance for Discontinuation of Isolation for Persons with COVID-19 Not in Healthcare Settings](#). Consultation with an occupational health provider and state and local health officials will help owners/operators develop the most appropriate plan.

The COVID-19 pandemic is constantly changing, so employers of critical infrastructure workers will need to continue to reassess COVID-19 transmission levels in their area and follow recommendations from local, state, and federal officials. This guidance does not replace state and local directives for businesses.

## Control plan—Engineering controls

Assess and identify opportunities to limit close contact with others (maintain a distance of at least 6 feet between people whenever possible) if feasible. This includes owners, operators, farmworkers, supervisors, crew leaders, delivery personnel, and anyone else entering the agricultural workplace. Engage farmworkers in this assessment process.

Adding touch-free methods (i.e., touch-free time clocks, automatic doors) or rearranging work tasks can help farmworkers stay at least 6 feet away from others. Possible options may include:

- Adjusting workflow to allow for a 6-foot distance between farmworkers, if feasible.
- Installing shields or barriers, such as plastic, between farmworkers, when a 6-foot distance between farmworkers is not possible.
- Adding additional clock in/out stations (touch-free if available) or additional time for clocking in/out to reduce crowding, if feasible.
- Removing or rearranging chairs and tables or adding visual cue marks in employee break areas to support social distancing between farmworkers.

Employers should also train workers to follow protective measures while on breaks.

## Control plan—Cleaning, disinfection, and sanitation

### Hand hygiene

- Encourage farmworkers to [wash their hands](#) often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Farmworkers must have reasonable access to permanent and/or temporary hand washing facilities equipped with soap, potable water, and clean, single-use towels ([29 CFR 1928.110](#) [↗](#) ; [40 CFR 170.411](#) [↗](#) , [170.509](#) [↗](#) and [170.605\(h\)-\(j\)](#) [↗](#) ). Easy access is especially important in areas where multiple farmworkers are working; increase the number of hand washing stations to minimize the distance to a station and the likelihood of crowding at stations.
- In addition, to increasing the frequency of hand washing, if hands aren't visibly soiled or dirty, farmworkers can use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol, rubbing hands until they are dry.

These sanitizing stations should be in multiple locations on the farm, if feasible, such as the point of entry or exit to a farm field, the location where farmworkers clock in/out, and, if possible, in individual containers made available to workers in field settings.

### Disinfection and sanitation

Farm owners/operators should develop [sanitation protocols](#) for daily cleaning and sanitation of work sites, where it is feasible to disinfect the work site, as well as cleaning and disinfecting procedures for high-touch areas such as tools, equipment, and [vehicles](#) used by farmworkers, following [CDC guidance on cleaning methods](#). In addition, they should:

- Follow the manufacturer’s contact time recommendations to make sure solutions remain on surfaces for the recommended time.
- Since children may be present on the farm, plan how to keep cleaning chemicals, including hand sanitizers out of reach of children.
- Choose disinfectants or alternative cleaning methods (e.g., soap and water) for surfaces with which food comes into contact.

Also see additional [information from EPA on cleaning and disinfecting workplaces](#) [↗](#).

**Conduct targeted and more frequent [cleaning and disinfecting](#) of high-touch areas** of shared spaces (e.g., time clocks, bathroom fixtures, vending machines, railings, door handles). For example, possible options may include:

- Clean and disinfect break areas between each group using the areas, as well as daily.
- Clean and disinfect locker rooms at the end of each shift.
- Provide disposable disinfectant wipes or other appropriate disinfectant supplies, and required PPE to use these safely, so that commonly touched surfaces can be wiped down, as needed.
- Refer to the [Transportation Section](#) below for guidance on sanitizing farm vehicles and implements.

### Sanitizing tools and equipment

Tools vary by agricultural production, but examples include handheld hoes, rakes, crates, milking equipment (including electronic components), gates, saddles, and animal harnesses.


- Where possible, do not share tools.
- If tools are used by multiple employees, they should be cleaned and disinfected between each employee use, if possible.
- When cleaning and disinfecting after each use is not possible, daily targeted and more frequent cleaning of shared equipment and tools is needed. In such cases, workers may also need to use gloves when handling shared tools and equipment.
- Dispose of all cleaning material and non-reusable PPE in compliance with [OSHA standards](#) [↗](#) to prevent further spread of COVID-19.

## Control plan—Administrative controls

### Training

All communication and training for workers should be easy to understand and should be provided in [languages](#) appropriate to the preferred languages spoken or read by those receiving the training, be at the appropriate literacy level, and include accurate and timely information about:

- Signs and symptoms of COVID-19, how it spreads, risks for workplace exposures, and how workers can protect themselves.
- Proper [handwashing](#) practices and use of hand sanitizer stations.
- Farm-specific social distancing practices (e.g., how to move through fields in a way that allows workers to stay at least 6 feet apart).
- [Cough and sneeze etiquette](#).
- Other routine infection control precautions:
  - Putting on and taking off masks and gloves.
  - Social distancing measures.
- Steps to take if they get sick.
- Employer policies regarding COVID-19 (disinfection protocols, housing and worker isolation, sick leave policies) and how employees should alert their supervisors if they are experiencing signs or symptoms of COVID-19 or if they have had recent close contact with a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 case.

Employers should consider placing simple posters at the entrance to the workplace and in break areas, employer furnished housing, and other workplace areas where they are likely to be seen. Posters should be in all of the languages that are common in the worker population. CDC has free, simple [posters available to download](#) and print, some of which are translated into different languages. OSHA provides [additional information](#)  about training on its COVID-19 webpage.

### Review leave and sick leave policies

- Consider modifying policies to make sure that ill workers are not in the workplace and are not penalized for taking sick leave. Make sure that workers are aware of and understand these policies.
- Analyze any incentive programs and consider modifying them, if warranted, so that workers are not penalized for taking sick leave if they have COVID-19.
- Consider additional flexibilities that might include giving advances on future sick leave and allowing workers to donate sick leave to each other.

### Promote social distancing

- Consider reducing crew sizes, staggering work shifts, mealtimes, and break times, and having farmworkers alternate rows in fields to facilitate a 6-foot distance between each other.
- Consider placing materials (such as harvesting buckets) and produce at a central transfer point instead of transferring directly from one worker to the next.
- Consider grouping healthy workers together into cohorts that include the same workers each day. This can increase the effectiveness of altering normal shift schedules by making sure that groups of workers are always assigned to the same shifts with the same coworkers. Effectiveness is optimized if it is aligned with shared living quarters and shared transportation. Grouping workers into cohorts may reduce the spread of COVID-19 transmission in the workplace by minimizing the number of different individuals who come into close contact with each other over the course of a week, and may also reduce the number of workers quarantined because of exposure to the virus.
- Grouped workers, as described above, are considered a single household or family. Farmworkers that are in the same shared housing unit should follow the [Households Living in Close Quarters Guidance](#). Owners/operators should maximize opportunities to place farmworkers residing together in the same vehicles for transportation and in the same groups to limit exposure.
- When providing training, consider providing it outside, in smaller than usual groups with participants 6 feet apart.

## Cloth face coverings in agricultural operations

CDC [recommends](#) wearing cloth face coverings as a protective measure in addition to social distancing (i.e., staying at least 6 feet away from others). Cloth face coverings may be especially important when social distancing is not possible or feasible based on working conditions. A cloth face covering may reduce the amount of large respiratory droplets that a person spreads when talking, sneezing, or coughing. Cloth face coverings may prevent people who do not know they have the virus that causes COVID-19 from spreading it to others. Cloth face coverings are intended to protect other people—not the wearer.

**Cloth face coverings are not PPE. They are not appropriate substitutes for PPE such as respirators (like N95 respirators) or medical facemasks (like surgical masks) in workplaces where respirators or facemasks are recommended or required to protect the wearer.**



While wearing cloth face coverings is a public health measure intended to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in communities, it may not be practical for workers to wear a single cloth face covering for the full duration of a work shift (e.g., eight or more hours) in agricultural operations if they become wet, soiled, or otherwise visibly contaminated during the work shift. If cloth face coverings are worn in these operations, employers should provide readily available clean cloth face coverings (or disposable facemask options) for workers to use when the coverings become wet, soiled, or otherwise visibly contaminated.

Employers who determine that cloth face coverings should be worn in the workplace, including to comply with state or local requirements for their use, should ensure the cloth face coverings:

Fit over the nose and mouth and fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face.








fit over the nose and mouth and fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face;

- Are secured with ties or ear loops;
- Include multiple layers of fabric;
- Allow for breathing without restriction (and are not worn by anyone with trouble breathing);
- Can be put on and removed by the wearer without help;
- Do not lead to heat-related illness (OSHA's [Heat page](#)  offers tips on water and rest breaks);
- Can be laundered using the warmest appropriate water setting and machine dried daily after the shift, without damage or change to shape (a clean cloth face covering should be used each day);
- Are not used if they become wet or contaminated;
- Are replaced with clean replacements, provided by employer, as needed;
- Are not shared among workers unless adequately laundered between uses;
- Are handled as little as possible to prevent transferring infectious materials to the cloth; and
- Are not worn with or instead of [respiratory protection](#)  when respirators are needed.

Since cloth face coverings may be difficult to wear for extended periods of time, especially in hot humid environments, require touching of the face and repositioning of the coverings, and may require frequent removal and replacement for water or nourishment breaks, social distancing will be very important when use of cloth face coverings are not feasible. In such instances, employers may also consider providing workers with alternatives to cloth face coverings, such as face shields.

## Control plan—Personal protective equipment (PPE)


As part of their hazard assessments, owners and operators should consider whether PPE is necessary to protect workers. This is especially important when engineering and administrative controls are difficult to maintain and there may be exposure to other workplace hazards.

Farm workers who have frequent and/or close contact (i.e., within 6 feet of) with coworkers who may be infected with SARS-CoV-2 are in the medium risk exposure category based on the [Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#)  . Medium risk workers rarely are required to use respirators for infection control. See the PPE section beginning on page 14 of the [booklet](#)   for details. As is always the case when respirators are not required to protect workers, owners and operators may consider allowing voluntary use of filtering facepiece respirators (such as N95s) if workers wish to provide and use such equipment on their own. Owners and operators who allow voluntary use of respirators should ensure they comply with the voluntary use provisions of the OSHA Respiratory Protection standard ([29 CFR 1910.134](#) ). Be aware that the use of filtering facepiece respirators may increase the risk of heat-related illness. Owners and operators should adjust water availability and frequency of breaks as appropriate whenever workers are at risk of heat-related illness.

Farmworkers may need PPE such as gloves, face and eye protection, and other types of PPE when cleaning and disinfecting work sites, including frequently touched surfaces, tools, and equipment. Anyone involved in cleaning and/or disinfecting workspaces or equipment should wear gloves selected based on information provided in the manufacturer's Safety Data Sheet (SDS) for the specific sanitizing or disinfectant agent.

When PPE is needed, owners and operators should consider additional hazards that may be created by poorly fitting PPE in the work environment.

### Training in the use of PPE

- Provide [appropriate PPE](#) training via the use of [videos](#) or in-person visual demonstrations, and ensure PPE is used properly by all farmworkers. Maintain physical/social distancing during these demonstrations. The following points should be included in training:
  - When to use PPE and what PPE is necessary.
  - How to properly [don \(put on\) and doff \(remove\) PPE](#) .
  - How to properly dispose of PPE, or if reusable, how to properly clean, and as appropriate, decontaminate PPE.
  - Reminder to change PPE if it becomes torn, dirty, or otherwise damaged.

- After removing any PPE, always [wash hands](#) with soap and water for 20 seconds. If soap and water are not immediately available, and hands are not visibly dirty, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol, rubbing hands until they are dry, may be used.

## Glove use

Farmworkers can continue to wear whatever gloves they normally wear while doing fieldwork. Such gloves may include disposable gloves made of lightweight nitrile or vinyl, or heavy-duty rubber work gloves that can be disinfected.

# Special considerations for shared housing

Farmworkers may have limited control over their environment in some employer furnished housing. Owners/operators should provide [basic guidance](#) about COVID-19 and steps being taken to prevent transmission in housing areas in language(s) the farmworkers understand. CDC also provides guidance for [shared or congregate housing facilities](#).

Family members should be kept together in housing facilities. In addition, grouped or cohorted workers, as described above, can be considered a single household or family. Farmworkers that are in the same shared housing unit should follow the [Households Living in Close Quarters Guidance](#). Most importantly, in employer-furnished housing, the owner/operator should provide a dedicated and segregated space for sleeping quarters, kitchens and restrooms for farmworkers with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 to recuperate without infecting others.

In addition to using cohorting for shared housing, additional measures such as enhanced sanitation and social distancing should be taken to reduce the likelihood of transmission within a shared housing group. These measures are detailed below.

## Housing and enhanced sanitation

- Provide disposable gloves, soap for hand washing, and household cleaners to help residents and staff implement [personal preventive measures](#).
- Develop and implement enhanced sanitation and cleaning plans that address frequency of sanitation and cleaning, and identify a responsible person.
- Do not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, or eating utensils. Non-disposable food service items used should be handled with gloves and washed with dish soap and hot water or in a dishwasher.

## Disinfecting living quarters, cooking and eating areas, bathrooms, and laundry facilities

- Ensure shared rooms have good air flow:
  - Use an air conditioner or open windows, if possible.
  - Clean air conditioner units and change filters according to the manufacturer's directions.
  - Provide air filtration systems in units without air conditioners, if possible.
- Clean common areas routinely following [CDC cleaning and disinfection guidelines](#). Residents should regularly clean and sanitize living quarters following [CDC cleaning and disinfection guidelines](#).
- Provide supplies for cleaning shared cooking utensils (such as knives, ladles, spatulas) and shared appliances (such as stoves, microwaves, and refrigerators, etc.).
- Maintain access to laundry facilities and post guidelines for doing laundry, if possible (e.g., restrict the number of people allowed in laundry rooms at one time to ensure social distancing, avoid shaking dirty laundry).
- Provide appropriate storage options for reusable PPE, such as work gloves, coveralls, safety glasses, boots, etc., to prevent cross contamination.



## Housing and social distancing

- Support social distancing during the entire time farmworkers are housed, including while recreating, cooking, and sleeping.
- Consider if possible, adding physical barriers, such as plastic flexible screens, between bathroom sinks when there are multiple sinks. Modify common areas to encourage social distancing, if feasible, including furniture removal or spacing.

- Consider modifications to bed configurations to maximize social distancing in sleeping quarters, to the extent feasible. This may be accomplished through:
  - Head-to-toe sleeping arrangements with at least 6 feet of distance between beds.
  - Adding physical barriers, such as plastic flexible screens when beds cannot be 6 feet apart.
  - Minimizing or avoiding the use of bunk beds, which make distancing more difficult.
- If possible and environmental conditions allow, conduct meetings and conversations outdoors to minimize congregating in close quarters.
- Encourage residents to wear [cloth face coverings](#) in shared spaces.
- Advise residents that cloth face coverings should not be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.

**Other important considerations in shared housing**

- Consider instituting daily health checks (e.g., symptom and/or temperature screening) and daily reporting to supervisors prior to and during the housing period to identify illnesses early.
- Complete the health checks in a way that keeps workers from congregating in large crowds, such as providing multiple screening points or staggered reporting times.
- Maintain confidentiality of workers with confirmed COVID-19 infection.
- Establish isolation plans for responding to farmworkers with COVID-19:
  - Provide accommodations separate from others, if feasible. Consider designating one person who is not at higher risk of severe illness to assist an ill, isolated person and that personnel managing sick employees are appropriately protected from exposure. When personnel need to be within 6 feet of a sick colleague, follow the same PPE considerations for screeners who need to be within 6 feet of workers.
  - Consider using separate buildings or rooms instead of physical barriers where possible.
  - Consider providing separate food and bathroom access where possible.
  - Consider restricting access to non-essential persons.
  - Provide medical access and telemedicine for emergent illnesses.
  - Provide transportation, if necessary, in a manner that does not expose others.
  - Consult with a clinician or public health authority so they may monitor the situation and provide guidance on treatment and continued housing of all farmworkers.

For H-2A temporary housing considerations, [review DOL explanation of alternative housing arrangements in response to COVID-19](#).  

# Special considerations for shared transportation

Transportation used by farmworkers may be provided by the employer, owner/operator, or a contractor, or might be a carpool arranged by the farmworkers. The following considerations should apply to all types of transportation to and from the agricultural work site:

- Masks are required on planes, buses, trains, and other forms of public transportation traveling into, within, or out of the United States and in U.S. transportation hubs such as airports and stations. Travelers are not required to wear a mask in outdoor areas of a conveyance (like on a ferry or the top deck of a bus). CDC

Help prevent the spread of COVID-19 when carpooling



recommends that travelers who are not [fully vaccinated](#) continue to wear a mask and maintain physical distance when traveling.

- Provide as much space between riders as possible.
- Group (or cohort) workers in the same crews and/or those sharing living quarters together when transporting.
- Increase the number of vehicles and the frequency of trips to limit the number of people in a vehicle.
- Make hand hygiene (hand washing/hand sanitizer) available and encourage riders to use hand hygiene before entering the vehicle and when arriving at destination.
- Instruct riders to follow [coughing and sneezing etiquette](#) when in the vehicle.

Transportation vehicles should be cleaned and disinfected in accordance with [CDC guidelines for non-emergency transport vehicles](#) before and after each trip, or daily at minimum.

## Special considerations for children

Taking children to a work site not only exposes them to the hazards in the environment, but also distracts workers from their tasks, increasing the risk of injury for children and adults.

- Advise farmworkers to continue sending their children to childcare while they are working at the farm, if possible. Please see: [Guidance for Child Care Programs that Remain Open](#).
- Establish and enforce policies for farmworkers that restrict children from work sites. If childcare programs and K-12 schools are not open, the work site is not an acceptable alternative.
- Even when homes and work sites overlap, continue to restrict children from the work site.
- If youth farmworkers are hired, ensure you are following [labor laws](#) and assigning [age-appropriate tasks](#) , including as required by child labor regulations at 29 CFR Part 570.
- For hired youth, provide extra supervision and guidance, especially highlighting protection methods to minimize their exposure to COVID-19.

## Other information

### Regulations

Worker health and safety in the agriculture industry is regulated under [29 CFR Part 1928](#) and the [General Duty Clause](#) of the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSH Act). Part 1928 covers “agricultural operations,” which would generally include any activities involved in the growing and harvesting of crops, egg production, and the raising of livestock. OSHA enforces



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most of the applicable standards, as well as the General Duty Clause, when no specific standard applies. However, the Wage & Hour Division (WHD) has shared authority with OSHA over two standards: the Field Sanitation standard ([29 CFR 1928.110](#)) and the Temporary Labor Camp standard ([29 CFR 1910.142](#)). The Environmental Protection Agency implements the [Worker Protection Standard](#) (40 CFR Part 170) to protect farmworkers and pesticide handlers from pesticides.

Workers’ rights

[Section 11\(c\)](#) of the [Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970](#), 29 USC 660(c), prohibits employers from retaliating against workers for raising concerns about safety and health conditions. Additionally, OSHA’s [Whistleblower Protection Program](#) enforces the provisions of more than 20 industry-specific federal laws protecting employees from retaliation for raising or reporting concerns about hazards or violations of various airline, commercial motor carrier, consumer product, environmental, financial reform, food safety, health insurance reform, motor vehicle safety, nuclear, pipeline, public transportation agency, railroad, maritime, securities, and tax laws. OSHA encourages workers who suffer such retaliation to [submit a complaint to OSHA](#) as soon as possible in order to file their complaint within the legal time limits, some of which may be as short as 30 days from the date they learned of or experienced retaliation. An employee can file a complaint with OSHA by [visiting or calling](#) his or her local OSHA office; sending a written complaint via fax, mail, or email to the closest OSHA office; or [filing a complaint online](#). No particular form is required, and complaints may be submitted in any language.

OSHA provides recommendations intended to assist employers in creating workplaces that are free of retaliation and guidance to employers on how to properly respond to workers who may complain about workplace hazards or potential violations of federal laws. OSHA urges employers to review its publication [Recommended Practices for Anti-Retaliation Programs](#).

Footnotes

[1] Employers should evaluate the burdens and benefits of recording workers’ temperatures or asking them to complete written questionnaires. These types of written products may become records that must be retained for the duration of the workers’ employment plus 30 years. See OSHA’s Access to Employee Exposure and Medical Records standard ([29 CFR 1910.1020](#)). If employers do not record workers’ temperatures, they would not be records that must be retained. Thus, employers and workers may wish to avoid making a record of temperatures when workers’ temperatures are checked.


[2] While OSHA’s Respiratory Protection standard ([29 CFR 1910.134](#)) does not apply to agricultural operations, performing screening, including checking workers’ temperatures, is not integrally related to the growing and harvesting of crops. Personnel performing screening are covered by OSHA’s general industry standards at [29 CFR Part 1910](#), including the Respiratory Protection standard. Screening activities also would not qualify for certification as “agricultural labor or services” under the H-2A visa program.

Additional Resources

- [CDC COVID-19 website](#)
- [CDC Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019](#)
- [CDC Prepare your Small Business and Employees for the Effects of COVID-19](#)
- [CDC Tools for Cross-Cultural Communication and Language Access](#)
- [NIOSH COVID-19 website](#)
- [CDC and OSHA Guidance for Meat and Poultry Processing Workers and Employers](#)
- [CDC COVID-19 and Animals website](#)
- [CDC-INFO: 1-800-CDC-INFO \(1-800-232-4636\) | TTY: 1-888-232-6348](#)
- [Worker Protection Standard](#)
- [OSHA COVID-19 website](#)
- [U.S. Department of Labor and U.S. Department of and Health and Human Services’ Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#)
- [Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Office of Foreign Labor Certification, COVID-19, Frequently Asked Questions, ROUND 3](#)
- [OSHA COVID-19 Standards](#)

[WHD COVID-19 and the American Workplace](#) 

- OFLC's COVID-19 related FAQs:

- [Round 1](#)  
- [Round 2](#)  
- [Round 3](#)  

- [USDA COVID-19 Federal Rural Resource Guide](#)  

## Disclaimer

This guidance is not a standard or regulation, and it creates no new legal obligations. It contains recommendations as well as descriptions of mandatory safety and health standards. The recommendations are advisory in nature, informational in content, and are intended to assist employers in providing a safe and healthful workplace. The Occupational Safety and Health Act requires employers to comply with safety and health standards and regulations promulgated by OSHA or by a state with an OSHA-approved state plan. In addition, the Act's General Duty Clause, Section 5(a) (1), requires employers to provide their employees with a workplace free from recognized hazards likely to cause death or serious physical harm.

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