

Minimizing the Risk of COVID-19 Within the Agricultural Workforce

In light of the recent events concerning the COVID-19 virus, BHHC is committed to providing our agricultural customers with the most relevant information on the subject matter. We agree that agriculture is a critical industry and it is important to provide support in the education of your employees to prevent the spread of the virus.

Employer responsibility:

California agricultural employers are required by the Cal/ OSHA state agency to provide employee training on methods in preventing the spread of the COVID-19 virus within the workplace. The training content should include at a minimum the following information:

- What is COVID-19 and how is it spread within the community.
 - How to prevent the spread of the virus if someone is sick.
 - Signs and symptoms to be aware of that may indicate an employee has contracted the illness.
- Increased handwashing with soap and water.
- Avoiding touching your face including, eyes, nose and mouth.
- Following good hygiene practices when sneezing or coughing (i.e. using a tissue or sleeve, avoid using hand to cover mouth).

- Following proper cleaning and disinfectant procedures on work surfaces and tools.
- Practice the 6-foot physical distancing rule.
- The importance of staying home when feeling ill or if someone has been exposed to a person who has tested positive for the virus.
- Discussing the employer's procedures for protecting employees against COVID-19.

Additional Information

Please see California's COVID-19 Response webpage for all recent updates.

<https://covid19.ca.gov/>

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Guidelines for Management and Supervisors:

Below are helpful training tips for managers and supervisors to aid in the prevention of contracting and spreading the virus:

What is COVID-19:

- COVID-19 is a virus that affect the lungs and airways. It's caused by a virus called coronavirus.
- The virus is mainly spread from person-to-person contact via respiratory droplets from when a person who is infected coughs, sneezes or talks.
- The virus is spread when the contaminated droplets land into a person's eye, nose or mouth.
- It can also be spread from touching your face (i.e. eyes, nose and mouth) if the virus is present on your hands
- Symptoms of someone who may be infected with COVID-19 includes:
 - Fever
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath
 - Repeated shaking with chills
 - Muscle pain
 - Headache
 - Sore throat
 - New loss of taste or smell
- According to the CDC someone exhibiting the following warning signs for the virus should seek medical attention immediately:
 - Trouble breathing
 - Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
 - New confusion or not able to be woken
 - Bluish lips or face
- Employees should notify their supervisor immediately if they are exhibiting any of the above indicated signs and/or symptoms. Employees demonstrating symptoms of respiratory illness should be sent home to prevent the spread of the illness.

Hygiene Practices:

- Face protection such as use of cloth or surgical masks is recommended but employers should keep up with county, state and federal mandated rules on requirements.
- Employees should be encouraged to frequently wash their hands especially before and after work. Hands should be washed with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. It is recommended for Supervisors to frequently monitor their employees to see that this practice is followed.
- In an effort to prevent spread, employees are encouraged to remove work clothes following their work shift to reduce the likelihood of spreading the virus to family members at home. Clothes worn at work should be set aside and washed as soon as possible before wearing again. When it comes to hygiene, treat COVID-19 just as you would when working around pesticides. Clothing can be a source of contamination similar to pesticide contamination.
- Consider having multiple handwashing stations for your crews as this will encourage frequent handwashing.
- Consider having employees who are monitoring fruit and vegetable intake to wear gloves, face masks, and eye protection. These employees typically have close contact with field laborers as they will need to hole punch an employee's card or use an electronic device such as a tablet to verify the quantity of product that is harvested. Antimicrobial cleaning wipes should be provided to these employees to ensure they are frequently disinfecting the tools or devices.
- Do not share tools, equipment, phones, or other "high touch" instruments. Clean the surfaces of these items as frequently as possible.

Physical Distancing:

- The Centers for Disease Control recommends maintaining a six-foot distance from others to avoid close contact. Implementing this mandate will require planning so it is vital to train your supervisors on how to stagger their employees. Once you have agreed on a procedure, it is important that all supervisors understand and follow it consistently and uniformly.

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- Physical distancing should not only be practiced indoors, but outdoors and in vehicles. It is recommended to limit the amount of group transportation taking place when transporting employees from field to field. Employers can encourage employees to limit carpooling to work if feasible for the employee(s).
- Consider having multiple breaks throughout the work shift to reduce the number of individuals who are on break all at once; remember we want to avoid group gatherings within close proximity.
- For break rooms including shade structures, limit only a number of employees in the break room at a time that can sit apart at least 6 feet. Signs can be posted outside break rooms as a reminder for everyone.
- As we are approaching warm weather in California, shade is required to prevent outdoor heat related illnesses. Not only is it important to consider adequate availability of shade, but it is also important to limit the number of employees allowed to sit under one shade structure. Ag employers may consider incorporating additional shade structures in the field to encourage social distancing practices
- Training should not be conducted in a large group setting. Employers can reduce the number of employees participating in a training session. Supervisors may want to increase the number of training sessions conducted throughout the work shift to avoid large groups. Indoor trainings should also be avoided, consider conducting all safety meetings and trainings outdoors.
- Ensuring that commonly touched surfaces are not only cleaned, but also sanitized. Discuss proper cleaning and sanitation practices with your crews. This includes shared hand tools, portable toilet facilities, door handles, water containers, etc.
- Water containers (i.e. igloos) should be cleaned and sanitized frequently and single use cups used to avoid sharing.
- Due to increased handwashing, supervisors should monitor soap supply in soap dispensers, to ensure soap will not run out throughout a work shift.
- Employees are to use single-use towels after washing their hands. Single-use towels are to be provided by the employer.

References:

- 1 California Department of Industrial Relations Division of Occupational Safety and Health Publications Unit. (2020). COVID-19 Infection Prevention for Agricultural Employers and Employees.
<https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/Coronavirus/COVID-19-Infection-Prevention-in-Agriculture.pdf>
- 2 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020). Coronavirus (COVID-19).
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

Practices for Cleaning and Sanitation

- Restrooms should be inspected frequently during a work shift to ensure the toilet facility is clean and sanitary. Disinfecting bathroom doors, locks and other areas that an employee may touch while using the facility will become the norm so it is critical to ensure that this is done frequently.
- Handwashing stations must be located near the restroom.

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Please contact the Loss Control team at:
losscontrol@bhhc.com for any further questions.