



ADVISORY FOR AGRICULTURAL WORKER PROTECTION DURING COVID-19 CRISIS, REV. 4/28/20

Agriculture is part of Ventura Country’s critical infrastructure and farmworkers are carrying out essential functions to keep our food supply safe and strong every day. Agricultural operations adhere to stringent policies related to worker safety and hygiene and each person in the chain of development, growth and production is vital to this effort. **This advisory includes enhanced measures to ensure employee health and safety. These protocols are voluntary, but employers are encouraged to implement them at their worksites.**

EMPLOYEE TRAINING

Communicate with employees simply, clearly and often: “Stay 6 ft Apart, Keep your Hands Clean, Don’t Come to Work if You Feel Sick”.

- **Employees should stay home if they have frequent cough, fever, shortness of breath, or if they have been exposed to someone who has COVID-19.**
- Employees should avoid sharing personal items with coworkers (i.e., food, dishes, cups, gloves, phones, etc.)
- Employees should cover coughs and sneezes.
 - Cover their mouth and nose with a tissue or use the inside of their elbow.
 - Throw used tissues in the trash.
 - Immediately wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, clean hands with a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Employees should stay a minimum of 6 feet from other coworkers (social distancing) to avoid spreading illness during work activities, breaks, and lunch.
 - **If the employee is unable to maintain a 6-foot distance due to the job requirements, a mask should be used to minimize transmission or infection.**
 - **Employees should keep masks with them at all times.**
- Employees should wash/sanitize their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds multiple times daily, including before and after work, breaks, eating, and use of toilet facilities.
- Employees should avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- **Employees should sanitize tools, high-touch areas in vehicles, etc. before and after use.**

SANITATION

- Have soap or disinfectant, potable water, and single-use disposable towels available at worksites and throughout facilities.
- Install handwashing stations and posters at farm entrances.
- Extend breaks or lunch if necessary, to allow time for handwashing.
- Facilities for hand washing should be within a 5-minute walk and should be checked for cleanliness throughout the workday.
 - Let employees know that breaks are paid in addition to piece rate (non-productive time).
- **Sanitizer or disinfectant should be accessible to employees at all times (in vehicles and/or on their persons).**
- Sanitize workspaces frequently throughout the day.

- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and spaces according to CDC disinfecting protocol. This includes:
 - Administrative, shipping/processing facilities, and any other enclosed spaces where people work multiple times throughout the day.
 - Door handles, bathroom areas, lunchroom tables and chairs, kitchen areas, shared space and facilities, time clock areas, shared computers, tools, and any vehicles used at the facility (i.e., forklift or golf cart steering wheels), etc.
- **Use sanitizer and/or disinfectant spray each day to deep clean: lunchroom areas, meeting rooms, time clock areas, offices, shipping facility, and all other common areas.**
- Ensure that all bathrooms (portable and in place) are adequately stocked, serviced, and disinfected at regular intervals.
- Utilize off-hour times to complete an aggressive sanitation of common areas daily.

SOCIAL DISTANCING

- Reduce meetings and group gathering to essential communication only.
 - Limit meetings to 10 people or less.
- Stagger breaks **and lunch** to ensure smaller groups and allow for appropriate social distancing.
- **Provide cloth masks and other protective equipment as recommended by Ventura County Public Health.**
- Implement social distancing protocols as much as possible while harvesting and processing.
- Space work and processing tables/booths to increase social distancing, when possible.
- Encourage activities such as pre-assembly of cartons and pre-bagging when possible.
- Visitors must be approved before arriving; employees should maintain social distancing from visitors.

ILL EMPLOYEES

- Employees at work who develop symptoms of COVID-19 (**fever, frequent cough, shortness of breath**) should be sent home immediately.
- Observe work crews when they arrive to work.
 - Ask if they have cough, fever, shortness of breath or have been exposed to anyone with a positive diagnosis
 - **If they are in regular contact with someone with a positive diagnosis, they should self-quarantine at home for 14 days and contact a doctor for support.**
- If ill, tell them to contact their medical provider or physician by phone before going to the medical office, clinic, or emergency room.
- Take temperatures of employees on arrival (when thermometers become available).
 - Infrared thermometers such as the McKesson infrared thermometer are recommended as they require minimal contact with the employee.
 - Persons checking temperatures should be properly trained to minimize exposure and cross contamination.
 - If an employee's temperature exceeds the recommended level, the employee should be sent home. (Currently the County of Ventura is using 100.3 degrees as the threshold).
- If an employee tests positive for COVID-19, there is some immediate information that should be collected and actions taken to protect other employees, customers, and ensure transparent communication both internally and externally.
 - These steps include the employee's work location, work hours, general and specific work duties, if the employee has traveled to multiple worksites recently with timing, and the last day the employee was at work. Identify who has been in contact with the employee.

- If you cannot verify the attending physician has contacted public health department, and you have also not been contacted by the health authorities, call them yourself immediately.
- Do not disclose the employee name unless asked to by the Health Department.
- **Do inform other employees that there has been a positive diagnosis on the worksite.**
- Health authorities will provide recommendations regarding the next steps for identifying employees and other protective measures.
- The employee must follow the direction and guidance of the relevant health department regarding specific isolation and quarantine requirements.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

- Use resources available from the CDC, CDPH, Ventura County Public Health, **VCEmergency.com**, **Industry Associations**, and/or the Ventura County Farmworker Resource Program to inform your employees:
 - **What COVID-19 is, symptoms, how it is transmitted**
 - How to stay safe at home
 - **How they or family members can quarantine if necessary**
 - **Where they can get information in their native languages**
 - All materials should be in both English and Spanish.
 - **Consider inviting the Ventura Health Care Agency Backpack Medicine Team, or other health care professional to the farm to provide information and answer questions**
- Be responsive to the personal needs of each employee.
 - **Implement flexible sick leave and supportive policies and practices.**
 - Comply quickly with government policies re: sick leave and time off. Inform employees of new policies.
 - The state has specifically indicated populations at risk to be those over the age of 65, residents and farmworkers with underlying health issues, residential care patients, and all those who care for these individuals are uniquely at risk.
 - Understand which of your employees this applies to, consider whether there are alternative work options or if their current job can be modified to ensure precautions are in place.
- Issue identification for employees to carry identifying them as part of an essential industry.
 - **Explain to employees that this is a precaution only.**
- Require farm labor contractors to follow sanitary and distancing best practices.
- Model the behavior and safety precautions you would like to see from your employees.

NON-ESSENTIAL VISITS AND TRAVEL

- Emphasize on-line ordering for any direct to consumer sales with outside pick-up or delivery options.
- Eliminate all non-essential and non-related services, such as entertainment activities.

EMPLOYER PROVIDED TRANSPORTATION

- **Where buses/vans bring workers to/from the field, consider adding more vehicles/drivers, or more trips so vehicles operate with lower passenger density.**
- **Keep windows open while passengers are on board to facilitate movement of air to carry away potential airborne viruses.**
- **All passengers and drivers wear face coverings.**
- **All vehicle surfaces are cleaned/disinfected by the vehicle operator between uses.**

EMPLOYER PROVIDED HOUSING

- Assign and communicate a common point of contact for employee questions, requests, and needs.
- Establish an actively monitored emergency reporting system.
- Implement site-specific risk assessments and tailor protective practices to address risks.
 - Conduct site-specific training detailing personal protective measures.
- Designate or identify separate rooms/units to house individuals that are sick with COVID symptoms. Create a plan that anticipates multiple workers sick at the same time.
- Employees who live together should ride together and be assigned to the same crew.
- Provide individual meals and water.
- Sanitize common areas and surfaces throughout the day.

RESOURCES

General:

- https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1_cG5O8a3ilTSC-iujAq7B6dBZ6z6leZx?usp=sharing Farmworker Resource Program list of resources
- <https://www.vcemergency.com> has current information and a list of clinics, hospitals, etc. Those who have no personal provider should contact one of the County clinics or urgent care centers.
- <https://www.ventura.org/departments/hsa/community-events/coronavirus-remote-resources/remote-resources-during-coronavirus/> Bilingual list of local and online resources to support the community during coronavirus, which includes basic needs, employment interruption support, support for seniors, mental health, educational activities, and stories, projects and more, as well as how to talk about coronavirus with kids and teens to help with fear and anxiety.
- <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2367667666668715/?ref=share> Spanish County Facebook Page
- <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2367667666668715/?ref=share> Spanish Coronavirus Facebook Group
- (<https://rapidresponsevc.org/>) VCCF Rapid Response Fund for financial help
- Vanessa.Hernandez@ventura.org to schedule on-farm COVID 19 education in Spanish: Backpack Medicine Team

Compliance/Best Practices:

- <https://aghealth.ucdavis.edu> UC Davis resource page
- <https://www.fels.net/1/> Farm Employer Labor Services
- <https://www.calstrawberry.com/en-us/> Strawberry Commission
- https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/WHD/Pandemic/FFCRA_webinar.pdf Department of Labor
- <https://www.wga.com/covid-19-resources-page> Western Growers Association
- <https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/coronavirus/> Cdfa resources for the ag. Sector

Food:

- <https://www.foodshare.com> Food Share of Ventura County
 - To donate, call Tessa 805-207-6567
- <http://www.cafoodbanks.org/covid19-food-donations> Farm to Family food donations