



## ADVISORY FOR AGRICULTURAL WORKER PROTECTION DURING COVID-19 CRISIS, REV. 7/13/20

Agriculture is part of Ventura County's critical infrastructure and farmworkers are working to keep our food supply safe and strong every day. It is crucial that everyone in the agricultural sector does their part to keep these essential workers healthy. Ventura County agricultural operations are already required to establish and implement an Injury and Illness Prevention Program (IIPP) to protect employees from all worksite hazards, including infectious diseases. Adherence to existing policies and additional COVID-19 prevention policies is vital. At a minimum, employers should comply with CAL-OSHA's COVID-prevention guidelines and daily checklist.

- o OSHA guidelines: <https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/Coronavirus/COVID-19-Infection-Prevention-in-Agriculture.pdf>
- o Daily Checklist: <https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/Coronavirus/COVID-19-General-Checklist-Employers.pdf>

Farmworkers and their families are vulnerable to COVID-19 due to a variety of long-standing issues such as crowded housing and language barriers.

These barriers and vulnerabilities make it vital to be responsive and aware of state guidance and local resources set forth in this advisory. 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.

### MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- Create a Risk Assessment and Prevention Plan for your operation. Share it with your employees
  - o Find template here: <https://www.vcemergency.com/vc-reopens>
- Communicate with and support your employees
  - o Communicate these basic messages to employees simply, clearly and often: "Stay 6 ft Apart, Wear a Mask, Keep your Hands Clean, Don't Come to Work if You Feel Sick, Practice Social Distancing during Non-work hours"
- Be responsive to the personal needs of each employee
  - o Implement flexible sick leave and supportive policies and practices
    - Modify policies to ensure ill workers can stay home and are encouraged to take sick leave
    - Consider leave flexibilities including advances on future sick leave or allowing workers to donate sick leave to each other
  - o Comply quickly with government policies re: sick leave and time off
  - o Inform employees of paid sick leave and family leave policies

- Require farm labor contractors and their crews to follow sanitary and distancing best practices
- Model the behavior and safety precautions you would like to see from your employees
- Employees at work who develop symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, frequent cough, shortness of breath, chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, or recent loss of taste or smell) should be sent home immediately
- Screen crews daily upon arrival at work
  - Ask if they have any COVID-symptoms such as cough, shortness of breath, headache, sore throat, or recent loss of taste or smell
  - Take temperatures of employees on arrival
    - 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)
- Respond quickly when an employee exhibits symptoms, tests positive for COVID, or has been exposed to someone who has tested positive. See guidelines from Public Health: <https://www.ventura.org/agricultural-commissioner/resources/>
  - If symptomatic
    - Send employee to get tested. Employee should stay home with pay until test results received
    - Send any other employees who have had regular contact (within 6 feet for 10 minutes or more) to get tested. They may keep working with strict precautions in place
    - Contact Public Health to inform them and get additional guidance (805) 981-5201
  - If an employee has tested positive
    - See CDC testing strategy: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/community/Testing-Strat-flow-diagram.pdf>
    - Contact Public Health for additional guidance (805) 981-5201
  - DO inform the workforce that someone is symptomatic or has tested positive. DO NOT disclose the name of the affected individual

## EMPLOYEE TRAINING

In addition to OSHA guidelines, we recommend:

- Use resources available from the CDC, CDPH, Ventura County Public Health, VCEmergency, Industry Associations, and/or the Ventura County Farmworker Resource Program to train your employees. Include:
  - 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 scheduling an on-site COVID 19 medical education session with Ventura County Human Services at (805) 385-1899, or [HSA-AGFRP@ventura.org](mailto:HSA-AGFRP@ventura.org). These sessions are designed for the agricultural community
- Employees should not share personal items with coworkers (i.e., food, dishes, cups, gloves, phones, etc.)
- Employees should wear face coverings at all times and be trained in their proper use
  - Ventura County Agricultural Commissioner and the Farmworker Resource Center can provide masks at no charge
- Employees should sanitize tools, high-touch areas in vehicles, etc. before and after use

## SANITATION

In addition to OSHA guidelines, we recommend:

- Have soap or sanitizer, potable water, and single-use disposable towels available at worksites, in vehicles, and throughout facilities
  - Install handwashing stations and posters at farm entrances, in break rooms, and other common areas
  - Extend breaks and lunch if necessary, to allow time for handwashing
  - Facilities for hand washing should be within a 5-minute walk and should be disinfected throughout the workday
  - Sanitizer or disinfectant should be accessible to employees at all times (in vehicles and/or on their persons)
  - 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 aggressive sanitation of common areas daily
  - Minimize exposure within vehicles
    - All vehicle surfaces are cleaned/disinfected by the vehicle operator between uses
    - Provide hand washing/sanitizing stations for use before riders enter a vehicle and when arriving at their destination
- Encourage employees to confidentially report concerns (sanitation, PPE, etc.) to employer or Farmworker Resource Program (805) 385-1899, or [HSA-AGFRP@ventura.org](mailto:HSA-AGFRP@ventura.org)

## SOCIAL DISTANCING

In addition to OSHA guidelines, we recommend:

- Reduce meetings and group gathering to essential communication only

- Limit meetings to 10 people or less
  - Hold meetings outside
- Re-arrange or remove chairs in break areas
- Add additional shade to allow social distancing during heat events
- Implement social distancing protocols as much as possible while harvesting and processing
  - Install shields or barriers between workers when a 6-foot distance is not possible
  - Have farmworkers work in alternate rows in fields
  - 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
- Require all visitors to wear masks
- Add additional timeclock stations or allow more time to clock in/out to reduce crowding
- Eliminate all non-essential and non-related services, such as entertainment activities
- Minimize exposure within vehicles
  - 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 TRANSPORTATION**

- Bus and vanpool transportation provided by farming and harvesting operations are encouraged to maintain safe distancing in seating configurations, as much as possible, that matches the social distancing guidance
- Be considerate of social distancing recommendations when transporting employees, making multiple trips as necessary; ensure facial coverings are utilized during transportation
- Assigned seating will help to determine exposure circles should an employee become ill
- Workers are encouraged to use facial coverings during transport, per CDPH guidance
- Follow federal and state guidelines when transporting H-2A employees
- Encourage worker-directed car-pooling efforts to incorporate protective health guidance, when appropriate; encourage carpools to include only individuals who reside together; ensure facial coverings are utilized during carpools that do not include family or living partners
- Keep windows open to maximize air-flow

#### **EMPLOYER PROVIDED HOUSING**

- Conduct training detailing site-specific and personal protective measures to safeguard against contraction and transmission of COVID-19.
  - This includes training upon arrival for all employees (and guest workers)

- Training should be based on public health guidance from the CDC, OSHA, state, and local public health authorities, as is specific to COVID-19
- Train employees to respect social distancing practices (6 feet), as is feasible for the site-specific area, including but not limited to living quarters
- Housing arrangements should be managed to maintain employee cohort integrity
- In addition to this training, incorporate observation as is appropriate, protective, respectful, and necessary in order to create a safe living environment
- Assign and communicate a common point of contact for employee questions, requests, and needs
- Establish an actively monitored emergency reporting system
- Give employees contact information for the Farmworker Resource Program (805) 385-1899, or [HSA-AGFRP@ventura.org](mailto:HSA-AGFRP@ventura.org)
- Implement site-specific risk assessments and tailor protective practices to address risks
  - Risks may dictate type and frequency of implementation of protective measures, such as cleaning and sanitation for high-contact areas and surfaces
- Follow CDC, DOL, and state guidelines for H-2A housing; consult with health department for isolation and housing options, if needed

## LOCAL RESOURCES

- [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1\\_cG5O8a3iITSC-ijAq7B6dBZ6z6leZx?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1_cG5O8a3iITSC-ijAq7B6dBZ6z6leZx?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.vcemergency.com/vc-reopens> for guidance on agricultural protocols.
- <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
- [HSA-AGFRP@ventura.org](mailto:HSA-AGFRP@ventura.org) to schedule an on-site COVID 19 education in Spanish

## OTHER RESOURCES

- Western Growers: <https://www.wga.com/covid-19-resources-page>
- California Strawberry Commission: <https://www.calstrawberry.com/en-us/Alerts/Coronavirus>
- Cal/OSHA: <https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/Coronavirus/Health-Care-General-Industry.html>