

# ADVISORY FOR AGRICULTURAL WORKER PROTECTION DURING COVID-19 CRISIS ON THE CENTRAL COAST OF CALIFORNIA



County of Monterey



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Commissioner



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Maintaining safe and healthy work environments for our farmworkers and other Agricultural employees has always been a priority in the Agriculture industry. In order to prevent, decrease and lower the impact of COVID-19 in the workplace, Monterey County leadership and the Agricultural industry have added enhanced measures to this Advisory to further protect worker health, safety, and hygiene. We recognize that, as an essential industry, we need to continue to provide and maintain the food supply chain while protecting the health of our workers and the broader community.

The Monterey County Agriculture Commissioner's Office and Supervisors Luis Alejo and Christopher Lopez, along with Grower-Shipper Association of Central California, Monterey County Farm Bureau, Monterey County Vintners and Growers Association, Coastal Growers Association, and California Strawberry Commission created an *Advisory for Agriculture Worker Protection During COVID-19 Crisis* to better protect farm and cannabis workers in Monterey County and throughout the state during the Coronavirus pandemic.

These processes were compiled based on reviews of our existing, already stringent practices, aligned with the best practices offered by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), CA Department of Public Health (CDPH), World Health Organization, and public health departments. As a world, we continue to learn more about how best to combat this pandemic, to that end, these guidelines are regularly evaluated, updated, and distributed in both English and Spanish.

Through this Advisory, all these organizations are supporting and encouraging the community to expeditiously implement these protective measures at their worksites. The objectives communicated here are: preventing and reducing transmission among staff; protecting people who are at higher risk for adverse health complications; maintaining business operations; and, minimizing adverse effects on other entities in their supply chains.

## EMPLOYEE HYGIENE

- Employee 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.
  - If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
  - Employees should avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
  - Employers should have soap or disinfectant, potable water, and single-use disposable towels available at worksites and throughout facilities.
- Employees should keep a minimum distance of 6 feet from co-workers when possible; this includes during breaks (social distancing).
- While not a replacement for other protective measures, such as frequent hand washing and social distancing, facial coverings are required as a protective safeguard to help reduce the risk of transmission or infection. Employees do not need to wear facial coverings when alone or when co-workers are not nearby.
- Employees should not share personal items with co-workers (i.e. food, dishes, cups, gloves, engaging in activities such as playing cards, etc.).
- Employees should cover coughs and sneezes; train them in the following CDC protocol:
  - 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 according to the CDC hand washing protocol above.
- Reduce meetings and group gatherings to essential communication only and limit such meetings to no more than 10 people if possible; maintain 6-foot spacing during meetings.
- Limit personal contact and grouping with in the facility and worksites and limit the number of people using common facilities at any one time; maintain 6-foot spacing while in lines.
- Follow CDC guidelines on health and hygiene as they evolve.

## ILL EMPLOYEES

- Require workers not to come to work if they are ill.
- Inform and encourage employees to self-monitor for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 if they suspect possible exposure.
- Employees at work that develop symptoms of being ill should be sent home immediately with information on available resources including hotline numbers for medical advice and social



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services; if symptoms are severe, employees should call their doctor or clinic before obtaining medical care.

- Observe work crews when they arrive to work or for transportation to work.
  - As part of the daily employer illness screening activities, recognize that symptoms include cough, fever temperature of more than 37.8°C / 100°F, or shortness of breath.
  - The EEOC has stated that because the CDC and state/local health authorities have acknowledged community spread of COVID-19 and issued attendant precautions as of March 2020, employers may measure employees' body temperature. However, employers should be aware that some individuals with COVID-19 do not have a fever. As with all medical information, the fact that an employee had a fever or other symptoms would be subject to ADA confidentiality requirements.
  - The CDC recommends using a temporal thermometer (one that uses an infrared scanner on the temporal artery in the forehead) if taking employees' temperatures; follow CDC guidelines on use.
- Regular communication is critical with employees to identify if they are in regular contact (i.e. at home, carpools) with someone who is positive for COVID-19. If so, employees should be guided on self-monitoring for 14 days and strongly encouraged to consult with their doctor for clinical management. Remaining in contact with ill employees is imperative to providing support as conditions and needs may change.
- If an employee tests positive for COVID-19, the employer will be contacted by the health department; there is some immediate information that should be collected and actions taken to protect other employees and 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 had contact with the employee at the worksite and during transport.
  - If unable to verify that the ill employee's attending physician has contacted the public health department, and health authorities have not made direct contact with the employer, call the health department immediately.
    - Do not disclose the employee name unless asked to by the health dept.
  - Health authorities will provide recommendations regarding the next steps in terms of identifying employees and further protective measures.
  - This employee should follow the direction and guidance of the relevant health department, state and federal guidelines, or health professional regarding specific isolation and quarantine requirements.
- For employees who have been sick with COVID-19 symptoms or diagnosed with COVID-19, they should stay at home for at least 7 full days since COVID-19 symptoms first appeared and at least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since the resolution of fever without using fever-reducing medications (i.e. Tylenol, Advil) and improvement of respiratory symptoms.
- Return to work decisions should be made in consultation with healthcare providers and state and local health departments.
- Quarantine or isolate H2 diagnosed and exposed workers to protect other employees and to minimize the risk of transmission within the entire workforce.

**PERFORM ROUTINE ENVIRONMENTAL CLEANING IN HIGH TRAFFIC AREAS**

- Sanitize workspaces throughout the day.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and spaces according to CDC disinfection protocol, including:
  - Administrative, shipping/processing facilities, and any other enclosed areas where people work multiple times throughout the day.
  - Frequently touched areas including door handles, bathroom areas, lunchroom table 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) and more.
  - Utilize off-hours time to complete aggressive sanitation of frequently touched surfaces and spaces daily.
- Ensure that all bathrooms (portable and in place) are adequately stocked and serviced at regular intervals and disinfected as appropriate.
- Regularly sanitize worker transportation buses.



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- Train employees to follow these standard operating procedures while the Monterey County “Shelter-in-Place” and California “Stay-at-Home” Orders are in effect.
- Provide training on COVID-19 prevention using resources available from the CDC, CDPH, and local health departments.
  - Include training on appropriate hand washing and hygiene practices and sanitation processes with training on sanitation procedures at home and in the community.
  - Any materials should be available in English and Spanish.
  - Implement a practice of on-going training and daily follow-up; utilize a progressive disciplinary practice to instill good hygiene practices.
- Encourage spacing of 6 feet between individuals while harvesting and processing; ensure employees utilize facial coverings when on-site.
  - Implement social distancing recommendation when transporting employees, making multiple trips as necessary; ensure facial coverings are utilized during transportation.
- Be responsive to the individual needs of each employee.
  - The state has specifically indicated populations at high 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 high-risk employees this guidance applies to; consider whether there are alternative work options or if their current job can be modified to ensure precautions are in place.
  - Be responsive to state guidance and respectful of their decisions related to that guidance.
- A facial covering is not required where it can be shown that such covering would create a risk to the employee related to their work as determined by local, state, or federal regulators or workplace safety guidelines.
- Encourage activities such as pre-assembly of cartons and pre-bagging when possible.
- Identify key processes and product and immediately cross-train employees in back-up positions, to be prepared when people must stay home.

**LIMIT NON-ESSENTIAL VISITS AND TRAVEL**

- Limit visitors to those necessary for the operation.
- To limit exposure of employees, emphasize on-line ordering for any direct to consumer sales with outside pick-up or delivery options.
- Visitors must be approved before arriving, and employees should keep social distancing (6 feet) away from any visitor.
- Encourage employees to be safe outside of work and follow the Monterey County “Shelter-in-Place” and California “Stay-at-Home” Orders when not at work, as well as all CDC recommendations.
- Eliminate all non-essential and non-related services, including entertainment activities.

**TRANSPORTATION OF EMPLOYEES**

- 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.

**EMPLOYER-PROVIDED EMPLOYEE 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.



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- Train employees to respect social distancing practices (6 feet), as is feasible for the site-specific area, including but not limited to living quarters.
  - 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.
- 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.

## REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

### Center for Disease Control

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/risk-assessment.html>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/public-health-management-decision-making.pdf>
- [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html?CDC\\_AA\\_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fspecific-groups%2Fguidance-business-response.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fspecific-groups%2Fguidance-business-response.html)
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html#spreads>

### State of California

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

### California Department of Public Health: Guidance

- <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Farmworker-Safety.aspx>
- <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Face-Coverings-Guidance.aspx>

### CalOSHA Safety & Health Guidance: COVID-19 Infection Protection for Ag Employees

- <https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/Coronavirus/COVID-19-Infection-Prevention-in-Agriculture.pdf>

### California Industrial Relations Department: Food Sector Workers Supplemental Pay FAQs

- <https://www.dir.ca.gov/dlse/FAQ-for-PSL.html>

### Monterey County Public Health

- <https://www.co.monterey.ca.us/government/departments-a-h/health/>

### San Benito County Public Health

- <https://hhsa.cosb.us/publichealth/>

### Santa Clara County Public Health

- <https://www.sccgov.org/sites/phd/Pages/phd.aspx>

### Santa Cruz County Public Health

- <https://www.santacruzhealth.org/>

### Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)

- <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/controlprevention.html>

### California Strawberry Commission

- <https://www.calstrawberry.com/en.us/Coronavirus>
- <https://www.calstrawberry.com/en.us/Food-Safety/Tools-for-Food-Safety>

### Communication Resources

- COVID-19 Posters (English & Spanish)
  - Prevention Posters
  - Alert Posters
  - <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/ncov2019.aspx>
- Hotlines for personal health questions:
  - Natividad Medical Center – 831-755-0793 (7am – 11pmm daily)
  - Salinas Valley Memorial Hospital – 831-772-7365 (7am – 7pm, daily)
  - Call 211 for social and other services
  - Text COVID-19 to 211-211 for social and other services
  - Visit <https://211montereycounty.org/> for social and other services