



ADVISORY FOR AGRICULTURAL WORKER PROTECTION DURING COVID-19 CRISIS

Agriculture is part of Ventura County’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.

EMPLOYEE HYGIENE

Employees should avoid sharing personal items with coworkers (i.e., food, dishes, cups, gloves, 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 and breaks.

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.

EMPLOYERS

Have soap or disinfectant, potable water, and single-use disposable towels available at worksites and throughout facilities.

- Install handwashing stations and COVID 19 information 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).

Require farm labor contractors to follow sanitary and distancing best practices.

Provide gloves, masks and any other protective equipment as recommended by Ventura County Public Health.

Reduce meetings and group gathering to essential communication only.

- Limit meetings to 10 people or less.
- Stagger breaks to ensure smaller groups and allow for appropriate social distancing.

Require workers **to stay home if they are ill.**

Employees at work that develop symptoms of being ill 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 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.

Health authorities will provide recommendations regarding the next steps for identifying employees and other protective measures.

- This employee must follow the direction and guidance of the relevant health department regarding specific isolation and quarantine requirements.

PERFORM ROUTINE ENVIRONMENTAL CLEANING IN HIGH TRAFFIC AREAS

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.

Utilize off-hour times to complete an aggressive sanitation of common areas daily.

- 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.

Be considerate of social distancing recommendations when transporting employees

- Regularly sanitize worker transportation vehicles.

TRAINING & CHANGES TO PROCESSES

Communicate with employees simply, clearly and often:

“Stay 6 ft Apart, Keep your Hands Clean, and Don’t Come to Work if You Feel Sick”.

Model the behavior and safety precautions you would like to see from your employees.

Train employees to:

- Follow these standard operating procedures while the Ventura County “Stay Well at Home” order or California “Stay at Home” orders are in effect.
- Provide training on COVID-19 prevention using resources available from the Center for Disease Control (CDC), California Department of Public Health (CDPH), Ventura County Public Health, www.vcemergency.com, and/or the Ventura County Farmworker Resource Program.
 - Include training on hand washing, hygiene practices, and sanitation.
 - Include materials about how to stay safe at home
 - All materials should be in both English and Spanish.

Encourage expanded spacing of persons while harvesting and processing.

Be responsive to the personal needs of each employee.

- 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.
- Be responsive to state guidance and respectful of their decisions related to that guidance.

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.

Identify key processes and products and immediately cross-train employees in backup positions to be prepared when people must stay home.

Issue identification for employees to carry identifying them as part of an essential industry.

LIMIT NON-ESSENTIAL VISITS AND TRAVEL

Emphasize on-line ordering for any direct to consumer sales with outside pick-up or delivery options.

Visitors must be approved before arriving, employees should maintain social distancing from visitors.

Eliminate all non-essential and non-related services, such as entertainment activities.

(Established 4/10/2020)