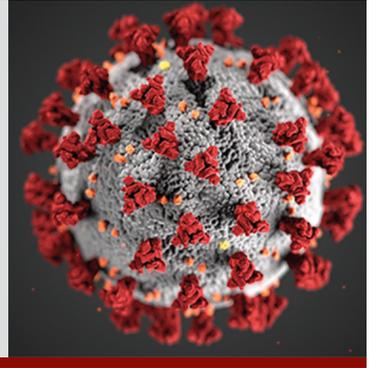


# Coronavirus (COVID-19) Prevention in Agriculture and Related Industries



## Prevent Worker Exposure to Coronavirus

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a serious workplace hazard that can be spread from one person to another when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Coronavirus can also be transmitted when a person touches a contaminated surface or object and then touches their own mouth, nose, or eyes.

Under Department of Labor & Industries (L&I) rules, employers are required to provide a safe and healthy workplace and to implement the governor's proclamation to prevent coronavirus transmission. [www.governor.wa.gov/news-media/inslee-announces-stay-home-stay-healthy%C2%A0order](http://www.governor.wa.gov/news-media/inslee-announces-stay-home-stay-healthy%C2%A0order).

The requirements discussed in this fact sheet are enforced by L&I using RCW 49.17, Chapter 296-307 WAC, and other applicable rules.

### To protect workers from coronavirus, employers are required to:

- Maintain social distancing (keep workers at least six feet apart) or use effective engineering/administrative controls;
- Ensure adequate hand washing facilities and frequent employee hand washing;
- Increase regular cleaning and sanitizing of common-touch surfaces;
- Make sure sick employees stay home (or are isolated) or go home, and that there are procedures for workers to report a suspected or confirmed coronavirus case; and
- Educate workers in the language they understand best about coronavirus and how to prevent transmission.

## Workplace Discrimination

It is against the law for any employer to take any adverse action such as firing, demoting, or otherwise retaliating against a worker they suspect of exercising safety and health rights such as raising safety and health concerns to their employer, participating in union activities concerning safety and health matters, filing a safety and health complaint or participating in an L&I Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH) investigation. Workers have 30 days to file a complaint with DOSH and/or with the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). [www.Lni.wa.gov/workers-rights/workplace-complaints/discrimination-in-the-workplace](http://www.Lni.wa.gov/workers-rights/workplace-complaints/discrimination-in-the-workplace)

### 1. Employers are required to implement an effective social distancing plan.

Employers must ensure all employees keep at least six feet away from coworkers and the public when at all possible. When strict social distancing is not feasible *for a specific task*, other prevention measures **are required**, such as use of barriers to block sneezes and coughs, and negative pressure ventilation.

### Suggestions to achieve social distancing (at least six feet) in agricultural work:

- Stagger tasks and work shifts so workers do not crowd.
- Limit work to only necessary tasks and organize work to allow for six-foot distancing.
- In the field, assign and enforce tasks to maintain a distance of at least six feet between people.



Division of Occupational Safety and Health



[www.Lni.wa.gov/safety-health](http://www.Lni.wa.gov/safety-health)



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- On production lines, reduce occupied “like task” worker stations and slow production pace.
- Reorganize work and break up tasks to facilitate social distancing. Consider shifting the location of workers and tools used.
- Provide two-way radios for workers to communicate without having to come together.
- Set up staging areas where tools or other materials can be dropped off and picked up by workers.
- Find alternatives to group meetings for sharing information (telephone conference for example).
- Hold meetings, breaks, lunches, and other gatherings outdoors or in large enough areas to maintain six-foot distancing.
- Establish physical-distance monitors to reinforce the minimum six-foot separation.
- Consider reducing the size or weight of the material being worked (lifted or processed) to accommodate one instead of two workers for the task.
- Review jobs normally done by more than one person to see if one person can do them.
- Prohibit carpooling when the passenger space in vans and trucks doesn’t allow for social distancing, and stress the importance of social distancing off the job.

### **Suggestions for mandatory alternate protections for tasks when six-foot spacing is not feasible:**

- Use physical barriers between workers to block direct face-to-face transmission.
- Use negative pressure ventilation in employee breathing zones at fixed work locations.
- Supply and institute mandatory (commercially-produced) facemask policy, such as disposable non-health care use masks. If facemasks are used it must be in combination with physical barriers or some other engineering control.

## **2. Employers are required to ensure frequent and adequate hand washing.**

- Require workers to wash hands frequently and effectively when they arrive at work, leave their workstations for breaks, use the bathroom; before and after they eat or drink or use tobacco; and after touching any surfaces or tools touched by others.
- Confirm all workers know the importance of how to wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, then dry hands with disposable paper towels and properly dispose of the towels.

- Portable hand washing stations are required in fields (transient work locations) and must contain at least tepid water, liquid soap, disposable paper towels and a trash can.

### **Suggestions for an effective hand washing plan and reducing transmission by hands:**

- Provide secondary hand washing or sanitizing stations (hand sanitizer or wipes/towelettes).
- Set up a schedule to ensure frequent re-supply of soap, running water, and paper towels on all jobsites and emptying of trash.
- Provide more flexible breaks to ensure workers have time to wash their hands.
- Use gloves when possible. When gloves are used, they should be disposable, or they must be regularly washed.

## **3. Employers are required to increase regular cleaning and sanitizing of common-touch surfaces.**

Employers must:

- Establish a housekeeping schedule to address regular, frequent, and periodic cleaning.
- Provide appropriate and adequate cleaning supplies for scheduled and, when necessary, spot cleaning and cleaning after a suspected or confirmed coronavirus case.
- Ensure floors, counters, and other surfaces are regularly cleaned with water and soap, or other cleaning liquids, to prevent build-up of dirt and residues that can harbor contamination.
- Make sure high-touch surfaces are properly disinfected on a frequent or periodic basis using a bleach solution or other EPA-approved disinfectant. [www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2](http://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2)
- Be sure employees follow effective cleaning procedures and use protective gloves and eye/face protection (face shields and/or goggles) when mixing, spraying, and wiping with liquid cleaning products, like diluted bleach.
- Make sure shared work vehicle interiors are sanitized after each different person’s use.
- Keep Safety Data Sheets (SDSs) for all disinfectants on site.
- Don’t mix chemicals — many are incompatible; and be sure to dilute and use chemicals per manufacturer label directions.

## **Suggestions for all workplaces:**

- Follow cleaning guidelines set by the CDC. [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html)
- Wash and rinse visible dirt/debris from equipment, tools, and other items before disinfecting.
- Cover fabric and rough surfaces with smooth materials so they are easier to clean.

## **4. Employers must require sick employees to stay home or stay in isolation.**

Employers must have practices in place that ensure sick workers stay home or remain isolated in housing or go home if they feel or look ill. Note: The main symptoms of coronavirus include fever (100.4 or higher), cough and shortness of breath, and loss of smell or taste. Other symptoms may include body aches, fatigue, and diarrhea.

- Develop a process if a worker becomes ill while at work or outside of work so workers and supervisors know the appropriate actions to take.
- Develop a process that includes immediate shutdown of areas where the employee was present. Institute deep cleaning and sanitation of all surface areas the worker touched prior to opening the area.

## **Suggestions for ensuring that sick employees are not at work:**

- Acknowledge the old workplace culture of powering through illness is not appropriate and support the shifting attitudes under this emergency to stay home when sick.
- Monitor employees, contractors, suppliers, customers and visitors entering the worksite for symptoms of the disease — consider testing temperatures or a short questionnaire.
- Notify co-workers who have come within six feet of a worker sick with coronavirus, without identifying the sick worker. Inform them of the measures being taken to keep employees safe, like cleaning and sanitizing.
- Seek and follow local health department and medical authority advice regarding sick employees.

## **5. Employers are required to provide basic workplace hazard education to workers in the language they understand best about coronavirus and how to prevent transmission.**

The education must include:

- The signs, symptoms, and risk factors associated with coronavirus illness.
- How to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, including steps being taken in the workplace to establish social distancing, frequent hand washing, and other precautions.
- The importance of hand washing and how to effectively wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Proper respiratory etiquette, including covering coughs and sneezes and not touching eyes, noses, or mouths with unwashed hands or gloves.
- Emphasize cleaning and sanitizing of frequently-touched items, such as cell phones and tools.

## **Suggestions for providing basic workplace education to prevent coronavirus transmission:**

- Hang posters/signs in appropriate languages from the health authorities (CDC, OSHA, DOSH, WA DOH, etc.) about how to prevent coronavirus transmission.
- Communicate important safety messages/updates daily.

## **Other Considerations**

- Employer-provided personal protective equipment may be helpful to further reduce transmission risk amongst healthy and asymptomatic workers.
- Face shields can prevent direct exposure to sneezes or coughs; they also provide splash protection from cleaning chemicals and disinfectants.
- Loose-fitting face masks or cloth face covers (like scarves and homemade masks) may be voluntarily worn by workers as a best practice measure to prevent the wearer from transmitting droplets from coughs and sneezes. It's important to understand that these types of face covers do not prevent inhalation of fine aerosols and are not protective in close proximity. If this type of protection is used, it should be washed and disinfected daily. Homemade masks are not an acceptable substitute for social distancing.

- Approved respirators such as N95s are not recommended for coronavirus prevention for healthy and asymptomatic workers. N95s or greater tightfitting respiratory protection are required for close exposure to people sick with coronavirus, those showing illness symptoms, or other normal chemical/pesticide exposures as previously evaluated or required under the label. Respirators require care in use and management under a program covered by the Respirator Rule. Agriculture employers must comply with Part Y-5 Respirators under Chapter 296-307 WAC to ensure proper use and care when respirators are necessary.
- Workers should be trained to not touch their mouths, noses, eyes, and nearby surfaces when putting on, using, and removing personal protective equipment and masks.
- Provide ways for workers to express any concerns as well as ideas to improve safety.
- Update your Accident Prevention Program (APP) with your plan.
- Businesses are encouraged to coordinate with local health officials for timely, appropriate responses.

## Resources

Call a consultant near you 1-800-547-8367 or email [DOSHConsultation@Lni.wa.gov](mailto:DOSHConsultation@Lni.wa.gov) for help  
[www.Lni.wa.gov/DOSHConsultation](http://www.Lni.wa.gov/DOSHConsultation)

The DOSH coronavirus website ([www.Lni.wa.gov/safety-health/safety-topics/topics/coronavirus](http://www.Lni.wa.gov/safety-health/safety-topics/topics/coronavirus)) includes resources from CDC, OSHA, and the Washington Department of Health.

Washington State Department of Health: 1-800-525-0127;  
[www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/Coronavirus](http://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/Coronavirus)

Local Health Jurisdictions and Tribes:  
[www.doh.wa.gov/ForPublicHealthandHealthcareProviders/PublicHealthSystemResourcesandServices/LHJandTribalDirectories](http://www.doh.wa.gov/ForPublicHealthandHealthcareProviders/PublicHealthSystemResourcesandServices/LHJandTribalDirectories)

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