

COVID-19 Guidance for Farmworkers and Farmworker Housing

Farmworkers are a crucial workforce in Whatcom County.

Below are general recommendations for all farm employers to help slow the spread of COVID-19.

General Recommendations

- All employees and visitors should be screened for COVID-19 symptoms at the beginning of every shift or when they come to the farm. Everyone should be asked, “YES or NO, since your last day of work, or since your last visit to this facility, have you had any of the following:”
 - A new fever (100.4°F or higher), or a sense of having a fever?
 - A new cough that you cannot attribute to another health condition?
 - New shortness of breath that you cannot attribute to another health condition?
 - A new sore throat that you cannot attribute to another health condition?
 - New muscle aches that you cannot attribute to another health condition, or that may not have been caused by a specific activity (such as physical exercise)?

Anyone answering “Yes” should be excluded. Employees with symptoms should not be allowed to work and visitors should not be allowed to enter the farm. Employees should be sent home and isolated. People with symptoms should contact their healthcare provider.

- Encourage employees and occupants to remain home if they are sick with cough and/or fever. Inform them about any sick leave policies.
- Employees and visitors should practice social distancing and be kept 6 feet apart as much as possible, this includes when working outside. Working outside does not remove all risk of COVID-19 exposure. Social distancing should be done anytime workers and visitors are together including during meals and breaks.
- It is recommended that all employees and visitors always wear nose and mouth coverings such as a bandana or sewn mask on the farm and when going into public places such as stores. It is inappropriate to divert any healthcare supplies, including surgical masks or other Personal Protective Equipment, for public use. It is therefore only recommended that businesses and the public use nontraditional face covers or cloth masks instead.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands. Proper handwashing or sanitation must be readily available to all employees, volunteers, and visitors. CDC recommends that people wash their hands often, and if soap and water is not readily available, use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Maintain a record of all visitors. Collect contact information, date, and travel from visitors, including vendors, inspectors, etc.
- As much as possible, keep work groups together in daily operations



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Farmworker Housing Recommendations

- Create a plan for how you will isolate ill farmworkers from those who are not sick. This may include reserving a housing unit only for ill farmworkers or coordinating with hotels for isolation.
- Clean and disinfect high touch surfaces frequently and at least daily. Frequently disinfect things such as doorknobs, tables, handrails, and shared tools.
- Increase the distance between people in sleeping spaces, where feasible. Offering individual rooms for groups or families is ideal, but not always available. In shared spaces, a “head-to-toe” sleeping arrangement with a minimum of six feet of distance between beds is recommended.
- Separate sick occupants from those without symptoms.
 - When possible isolate sick workers in a housing unit separate from workers with no symptoms.
 - Facilities with a single room should assign sick occupants to one side and occupants without symptoms to the opposite side.
- If you have occupants or employees exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms, please contact Whatcom County Health Department for guidance at 360-778-6100.
- Eliminate all large group activities. Increase the distance between workers during meals/free time. Plan activities that do not require close physical contact, stagger outdoor time.
- Discourage visitation. Discourage visitation at your facility and offer alternative methods of visitation (Skype, FaceTime, etc.), if available.
- Anytime shared transportation, such as busses or vans, are used to move employees, groups should be limited to no more than 10 people. This includes transportation to fields/orchards and to town for shopping. When possible, send only 1-2 people to town for shopping with a list for the entire housing unit or take multiple trips with few people in each trip. Shared vehicles should be sanitized between groups and at least daily.
- As much as possible, keep work groups together in daily operations and housing assignments.

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