

Public Health COVID-19 Guidance: Farm and Agricultural Workers in Washington State

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Section 1: Introduction

Farm and agricultural product processing facilities are a component of the critical infrastructure within the food and agriculture sector. Multiple outbreaks of COVID-19 among farm and agricultural products processing facility workers have occurred in Washington State. Outbreaks in agricultural settings can threaten the health of workers, their families, and their communities, as well as the food supply and economic recovery for Washington State and beyond. This document provides guidance about how to reduce the frequency and severity of outbreaks for farm and agricultural product processing facilities, employers, and workers — including those involved in fruit, vegetable, and other food production and packaging operations.

This document is meant to provide public health guidance to employers and businesses in the farm and agricultural sectors in Washington State. Guidance in this document is meant to complement, not to replace, Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 246-358-002 and WAC 296-307-16102. It does not replace or override requirements from the Washington Department of Labor & Industries (L&I), its Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH), or any legal requirements as written in the WAC or Revised Code of Washington (RCW), or as ordered by the Governor. These documents are available in **Section 8** of this guidance.

Scope of this guidance document

This purpose of this guidance document is to address and recommend public health mitigation measures and best practices to decrease workers’ risk of SARS-CoV-2 infection in the agricultural industry. This industry-specific guidance is focused on the workplace, and supplements other guidance on public health measures outside the workplace to mitigate the spread of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, in the community. This document was produced by the Washington State (WA) Department of Health (DOH) and contains public health guidance and jurisdictional requirements. Please consult other federal, tribal, state, and local regulatory authorities and divisions for recommendations and requirements that may not be outlined in this document. These include, but are not limited to, the Department of Labor (DOL), Washington State Department of Labor and Industries (L&I), and local health jurisdictions (LHJ). This document may provide references but is not comprehensive for other jurisdictional authorities.

Definitions for terms used in this document

Asymptomatic case: People can have a COVID-19 infection and test positive without showing any symptoms of the illness. They can still transmit the infection. These infections are called asymptomatic cases.

Case investigation: A case investigation may be carried out by an LHJ or DOH to identify cases in a disease outbreak and to conduct contact tracing, among other activities.

Cleaning: Cleaning means to remove germs, dirt and other impurities from a surface, usually with soap and water.

Close contact: In a COVID-19 outbreak, someone is considered a “close contact” when they have spent 15 minutes or longer within 6 feet of someone confirmed or suspected to have COVID-19. Importantly, this means a total of 15 minutes over a 24-hour period, regardless of whether that occurs during a single 15-minute stretch or multiple shorter interactions. Transmission of SARS-CoV-2, the virus causing COVID-19, can still occur during shorter interactions, but public health authorities prioritize interactions longer than 15 minutes because these interactions are higher risk. Because people can transmit the SARS-CoV-2 virus before becoming ill, contacts should be considered at risk in the 2 days before the infected person became ill (or 2 days before the infected person tested positive if they do not have symptoms).

Cloth masks or cloth face coverings: The CDC recommends that face coverings fit properly and [recommends strategies](#) to improve mask fitting to more effectively slow the spread of COVID-19. These strategies include wearing a cloth mask over a medical procedure mask, knotting the ear loops of a medical procedure mask, using a mask fitter, or using a nylon covering over a mask. CDC recommends wearing a mask in all public settings combined with continued implementation of effective public health measures such as vaccination, physical distancing, hand hygiene, and isolation and quarantine. In [Washington State, face coverings are required in public and in workspaces](#). These coverings do not replace PPE such as respirators that may be required for certain tasks in a workplace. Face shields may not be used in place of a mask or face covering unless being used as an accommodation for a disability. L&I has developed an occupational safety and health publication for choosing masks: [Which Mask for Which Task?](#)

Contact tracing: The process of interviewing a confirmed case to identify people who have been in close contact with a person who is a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 during that person’s infectious period (how long the person is sick and can transmit the virus – this will vary for each case).

COVID-19: Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness caused by a new virus called SARS-CoV-2. Symptoms can include a fever, cough, and shortness of breath, as well as other [symptoms](#). COVID-19 can range from very mild to severe; even people who do not show any symptoms can spread the virus. Some people become so sick they must be admitted to the hospital, and some people may die from the illness. The virus is thought to spread mainly from person to person:

- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about six feet or two meters).
- Through droplets and airborne particles formed when a person who has COVID-19 coughs, sneezes, sings, talks, or breathes. There is growing evidence that droplets and

airborne particles can remain suspended in the air and be breathed in by others, and travel distances beyond 6 feet (for example – during choir practice, in restaurants, or in fitness classes). In general, indoor environments and other enclosed spaces without good ventilation increase this risk.

- By touching a surface that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or face.

Confirmed COVID-19 case: A case of COVID-19 occurs when a worker tests positive for COVID-19 with a test for viral RNA (such as an RT-PCR test or other molecular test), or an antigen test. In some situations, a positive antigen test should be confirmed with an RT-PCR test.

COVID-19 Outbreak: Washington State Department of Health (WA DOH) defines an outbreak of COVID-19 as the following:

Within the same location or worksite,

- 2 or more cases of COVID-19 (including at least one confirmed case; may include one or more probable cases)
- Occurring within a 14 day time period
- With a likely link between the two (worked near each other, shared shifts or lunch breaks, shared housing, etc.)

Disinfecting: Disinfecting means using chemicals to kill germs that might be on a surface. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has a list of disinfectants that can be used to kill the virus that causes COVID-19: <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>

Group shelter means a dwelling unit or cluster of dwelling units for more than one person.

Housing: When employers provide workers with housing, such as for guest workers in H2A housing, special precautions should be taken to ensure that the housing unit does not contribute to the spread of COVID-19.

Isolation and quarantine help protect the public by preventing exposure to people who have or may have a contagious disease. **Isolation** separates sick people with a contagious disease from people who are not sick. **Quarantine** separates and restricts the movement of people who were exposed to a contagious disease to see if they become sick.

Local Health Jurisdiction (LHJ): A local health jurisdiction is the local county or district agency providing public health services to persons within the area. All cases of COVID-19 and outbreaks must be reported to the local health jurisdiction per Washington state law ([WAC 246-101](#)).

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE): Personal protective equipment, commonly referred to as "PPE", is equipment worn to minimize exposure to hazards that cause serious workplace injuries and illnesses. PPE may be needed to prevent certain exposures when Engineering and

Administrative controls do not ensure that employees will be able to maintain physical distancing at all times. Examples of PPE include: gloves, goggles, face shields, and face masks.

Physical distancing: Also known as “social distancing,” this is the practice of separating people so that they are at least 6 feet, or about 2 meters, apart.

Probable case: A probable case occurs when a person who has had close contact with a confirmed case shows symptoms of COVID-19 infection, defined by current [CDC guidelines](#).

Public Health Officer: The Health Officers of an LHJ have the legal authority to take the action needed to control and prevent the spread of any dangerous contagious or infectious diseases that may occur within their LHJ.

SARS-CoV-2: A viral respiratory illness caused by a coronavirus called severe acute respiratory syndrome-associated coronavirus (SARS-CoV). The “2” refers to the second strain of the virus that emerged in 2019, which causes COVID-19 illness.

Testing for COVID-19: There are many types of tests available for COVID-19. Two types of tests can be used to confirm an active case of COVID-19: **molecular** and **antigen tests**. These are considered **diagnostic tests**.

- **The most commonly used molecular test is** Polymerase-Chain Reaction, or **PCR**. It is used to identify and bind to the genetic material of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19 illness. PCR and molecular tests are used to diagnose cases of COVID-19.
- **Antigen** tests bind to proteins on the surface of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Antigen tests are also used to diagnose cases of COVID-19 infection.
- **Other types of tests: Antibody tests** identify antibodies to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19 illness. These tests may show evidence of prior infection with SARS-CoV-2. Antibody tests are not used to diagnose cases of COVID-19.

Transportation: When employers provide transportation for workers to any location such as the work site, employer-provided housing, or when transporting workers to complete personal errands such as food shopping, care must be taken to limit the spread of COVID-19.

Section 2: Developing COVID-19 Policies and Procedures

1. Employers should identify at least one workplace COVID-19 coordinator; this could be a shift or plant supervisor, a health and safety manager, a human resources (HR) staff member, etc. that is the point of contact for the local Public Health Jurisdiction (LHJ).
2. Employers are encouraged to develop flexible, non-punitive sick leave policies so that workers are not incentivized to conceal or not report symptoms.
3. Employers should develop a written COVID-19 assessment and control plan for each worksite. This should follow the [DOSH directive 1.70](#); see Section 7 for additional resources. This directive provides enforcement policy when evaluating workplace implementation of social distancing, facial coverings and respiratory protection,

sanitation and sick employee practices as required by the Governor. [The CDC also publishes information for agricultural employers](#); further CDC resources are provided below (Section 7).

- Employers should focus particularly on implementing policies that follow the hierarchy of controls, as detailed in CDC guidance. Use of face masks or personal protective equipment does **not** prevent the need to implement other elements of source control, engineering controls, and administrative controls.
 - Employers should also group workers into cohorts to limit potential transmission, and should maintain cohorts for housing, transportation, and work settings.
4. [Employers who provide temporary housing should follow state guidance](#) to minimize the risk of transmission in these settings. Employers should also develop plans for isolation and quarantine of workers who are diagnosed with COVID-19 or have been in contact with someone with COVID-19.
 5. Employers who employ workers traveling from outside of Washington state should adhere to Governor Inslee’s proclamations as well as CDC guidance regarding travel. Specifically, workers should self-quarantine for 7 days after travel. Workers should also be tested 3-5 days after arrival. If arriving employees will be sharing housing, then if possible these employees should be tested immediately upon arrival as well to minimize potential transmission to others in their housing unit. Depending on the exact nature of the shared housing and other factors, local health jurisdictions may recommend an alternate testing schedule. [Further information is available from CDC on travel during COVID-19.](#)

Section 3: Education plan for workers

In order to reduce opportunities for transmission of COVID-19 in the workplace, employers should provide education to all workers about COVID-19 symptoms, ways to prevent the spread, and worksite policies aimed at protecting workers and stopping the spread. Employers should work with their local health jurisdiction to utilize currently available education materials and posters and see education resources in **Section 8** of this guidance.

Visit the [DOH website for COVID-19 educational materials](#) in [26 languages](#). DOH has a COVID-19 Community Engagement Task Force which can provide additional resources and guidance if needed: doh-cetf@doh.wa.gov. More information and resources can be found on the [Washington State Coronavirus Response \(COVID-19\)](#) website.

Please check with other jurisdictions such as WA L&I and LHJs for additional requirements within these recommendations for individual worksites. Reference [L&I](#) and their recommendations and requirements for [Agricultural COVID-19 Requirements](#).

COVID-19 workplace education topics may include:

1. COVID-19 symptoms and when employees should seek medical help.
2. How COVID-19 is spread.

3. How an infected person can spread COVID-19 to others even when they are not sick.
4. The employer's plan for screening workers for COVID-19. Encourage employees to report symptoms as soon as they develop.
5. Employer's sick leave policies.
6. How employees can protect themselves and prevent the spread of COVID-19 at the work site, including any new equipment, procedures, or policies created to limit the spread of COVID-19 at the work site.
7. Proper hand hygiene in the work site and at home:
 - a. When employees arrive and before they start their shift.
 - b. Before and after eating or using the toilet.
 - c. After close interaction with other persons.
 - d. After contacting shared surfaces or tools.
 - e. Before and after wearing a mask or gloves.
 - f. After blowing nose, coughing or sneezing.
8. Explain that alcohol-based hand sanitizer can be used if a sink or hand-washing station is not immediately available. Alcohol-based hand sanitizer is as effective as washing hands with soap and water, unless hands are visibly soiled.
9. The importance of physical distancing from others at work and at home.
10. How to properly use cloth face coverings and what they do, including:
 - a. Recommendation that everyone should wear cloth face coverings when around other people; including at work, while using shared transportation and when out in the community.
 - b. Cloth face coverings can help protect the people around the user of the cloth face covering when combined with physical distancing and frequent hand washing.
 - c. Cloth face coverings are not protective equipment and do not protect the person wearing a cloth face covering from COVID-19.
 - d. How to properly wear cloth face coverings so that they are [effective as defined by the CDC](#). This includes strategies to improve mask fitting to more effectively slow the spread of COVID-19. These strategies include wearing a cloth mask over a medical procedure mask, knotting the ear loops of a medical procedure mask, using a mask fitter, or using a nylon covering over a mask. CDC recommends wearing a mask in all public settings combined with continued implementation of effective public health measures such as vaccination, physical distancing, hand hygiene, and isolation and quarantine.
 - e. Cloth face coverings should be washed and dried daily between usages.
 - f. Cloth face coverings should be replaced with a clean mask or face covering when they become wet or soiled.
 - g. Employer policy for cloth face coverings, including how to request face coverings at the worksite if a new one is needed during the workday.
 - h. Employer should include information about when a cloth face covering is sufficient and when a higher level of protection, like a respirator, should be used. This should include information about what a respirator is, and the differences between respirators and cloth face coverings.

11. Provide signage and other visual markers to remind workers of key policies and procedures. The Pacific Northwest Agricultural Safety and Health Center produces resources that employers may find helpful, though these materials have not been reviewed or endorsed by the Department of Health. These resources are available at: <https://deohs.washington.edu/pnash/blog/responding-covid-19>
12. Training materials and signage should be made available in the languages and literacy level that employees are most likely to understand.
 - a. For COVID-19 educational materials in 26 languages, please visit <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/NovelCoronavirusOutbreak2020/HealthEducation>
 - b. The Washington Department of Health has a COVID-19 Community Engagement Task Force which can provide additional resources and guidance: doh-cetf@doh.wa.gov

Section 4: Protecting & Screening Workers

Protective measures:

1. Ensure that the appropriate face coverings or masks that are [fit properly](#) are worn in all areas of the facility. Masks may only be removed while actively eating or drinking.
2. Encourage basic common hygiene practices, such as hand washing and respiratory etiquette, including covering coughs and sneezes.
3. Provide extra sinks, hand sanitizer dispensers, etc. to facilitate hygiene practices.
4. Wherever possible, allow for workers to have at least 6 feet (about 2 meters) of space between them in work areas, break areas, etc.
5. Where physical distancing is not possible, erect protective barriers, especially in areas where workers are facing each other at a close distance, such as on a packing line.
6. [Use respirators](#) when inside a room with 10 or more people where 6 feet of distance isn't possible.
7. Enact enhanced cleaning of high-touch surfaces in common areas such as restrooms, break rooms, etc.
8. Ensure [proper ventilation in the building](#).
9. Consider staggering work shifts, break times, etc. to reduce the number of people moving throughout the building at once.
10. Break areas:
 - a. If possible, stagger break times to reduce the number of crew in the break room.
 - b. If possible, provide outdoor seating areas to facilitate safe lunch breaks.
 - c. If possible, add protective barriers in the break room.
 - d. Ensure access to hand sanitizer in the break room.
11. Smoking is not recommended by DOH. If workers take smoke breaks, they must adhere to at least 6 feet of physical distance. Consider limiting breaks to 2 people at a time.
12. Reference [CDC Guidelines for Agriculture Workers and Employers](#).
13. Reference [L&I](#) and their recommendations and requirements for [Agricultural COVID-19 Requirements](#) and [food processing](#) standards in these worksites.

Daily screening:

For all work settings, follow DOH Guidance for [Daily COVID-19 Screening of Staff and Visitors](#).

1. Employers should perform active fever and COVID-19 symptom screening:
 - a. Daily when working during work assignments
 - b. Daily during Close Contact/Post-Exposure Quarantine.
 - c. On all contractors, vendors, and visitors who visit a worksite.
2. Temperature should ideally be measured with a no-touch thermometer.
3. Use current CDC guidelines for [COVID-19 symptoms to guide screening](#).
4. Employees conducting symptom/temperature screening should wear PPE including masks that are [fitted properly](#) and eye protection.
5. Educate workers to report any COVID-19 symptoms to their manager or supervisor should they develop symptoms during the workday.
6. Employer should maintain a symptom and temperature log which may be reviewed by LHJs or DOH in the event of an outbreak of COVID-19 at the workplace.
7. Reference [L&I](#) and their recommendations and requirements for [Agricultural COVID-19 Requirements](#) and [food processing](#) standards in these worksites.

Responding to symptomatic workers:

Any worker or visitor who reports COVID-like symptoms or has a fever (temperature 100.4°F/ 38°C or greater) should be immediately isolated from others. Consult for medical advice if a worker is showing symptoms to determine the need for continued isolation if COVID-19 test is negative or unavailable.

1. Develop a plan for responding to symptomatic workers in the work site or in employer-provided housing. The plan should include information about where to send workers for testing if needed. Community and migrant health centers provide testing in many areas. Contact the local health jurisdiction for testing options in your community.
2. Provide information about self-isolation to prevent infecting others and where to access healthcare and testing. The CDC offers [written and video educational materials on isolation \(https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/end-home-isolation.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/end-home-isolation.html). Further information is included below on access to SARS-CoV-2 testing in Washington.
3. Workers with fever or COVID-19 symptoms should be evaluated by a healthcare provider and have PCR, molecular or antigen testing for COVID-19, if indicated.
4. If working in an office or other work site immediately send the worker home with instructions to self-isolate; Alternatively, the worker could be directed to an isolation facility if available as instructed by the local health jurisdiction.
5. Any worker who is isolating in an employer-provided space should have daily medical checks arranged by the employer to ensure that the worker does not need additional medical evaluation or treatment.
6. If anyone who is a close contact of the sick worker develops symptoms of COVID, they should undergo additional PCR, molecular or antigen testing for COVID-19.

7. Anyone providing care, evaluation, or transportation to the isolated worker must wear appropriate PPE: [respirator, face shield, gown and gloves](#).

Section 5: Testing for the Virus that Causes COVID-19

There are many kinds of tests that have been developed to identify the virus that causes COVID-19. Currently, DOH considers two types of tests “diagnostic tests” that can be used to confirm a case of COVID-19: molecular/PCR and antigen tests. Other types of testing, such as antibody tests, are not used to make a diagnosis of COVID-19.

Understanding COVID-19 test results

Anyone testing positive by a PCR or molecular test for the virus that causes COVID-19 is a **confirmed case of COVID-19**. Anyone testing positive by an antigen test should be confirmed with a molecular/PCR test. Anyone testing negative by an antigen test but who is symptomatic should be confirmed with a molecular/PCR test.

1. Confirmed cases of COVID-19 and cases that are being confirmed through additional testing must be isolated ([Section 7](#)).
2. Cases should be immediately reported to LHJs, as required by law. A list of LHJ contacts can be found here: <https://www.doh.wa.gov/AboutUs/PublicHealthSystem/LocalHealthJurisdictions>.
3. If sick, cases should have access to medical care.
4. Cases should be provided safe transportation to their destination (home, medical care, isolation facility, etc.) to avoid exposing others.

Report workers who test positive for COVID-19 by diagnostic testing, as mandated, to the LHJ.

COVID-19 testing & public health

1. The health officer of each local health jurisdiction has the authority to specify the recommended testing strategy and the local health jurisdiction will coordinate with local healthcare providers as needed. Depending on the situation, local health jurisdictions may specify a range of testing approaches. In general, farmworkers represent a higher-risk group for SARS-CoV-2 infection. Because of the significant proportion of asymptomatic cases of SARS-CoV-2 infection and the important role of asymptomatic and pre-symptomatic transmission, early use of widespread testing is often needed to understand and control outbreaks. Further information is provided below on potential testing approaches:
 - a. Regardless of the situation, any symptomatic worker must be sent home, referred for SARS-CoV-2 testing, and instructed to isolate pending the test result. Employers can refer to the Department of Health website (<https://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/COVID19/TestingforCOVID19/TestingLocations>) or local health jurisdiction websites for information about testing locations.
 - b. If a single member of a housing unit or group shelter tests positive, the local health jurisdiction may order testing of the entire group.

- c. If a single member of a work facility tests positive, local health jurisdictions may order testing of the entire worksite.
 - d. For ongoing outbreaks, local health jurisdictions may pursue wider testing strategies. The public health officer has authority to order testing for **all** staff and employees to identify both symptomatic and asymptomatic persons within the building or site and make site-specific isolation and quarantine orders. Use of mass testing early in an outbreak can help to identify the scope of the outbreak, control transmission, and sometimes identify areas for further mitigation efforts.
 - e. In settings with high levels of SARS-CoV-2 transmission or a persistent outbreak, serial testing (e.g., weekly testing of all employees) may also be recommended.
 - f. If employers have any questions about testing plans for a worksite or housing unit, they should contact their local health jurisdiction. Local health jurisdictions can also contact the Department of Health Communicable Disease Epidemiology Non-Healthcare Congregate Settings team for input and assistance with outbreak response.
2. Either the local health jurisdiction or the organization providing testing services will be responsible for notifying people who test positive for COVID-19, including workers and any others identified in the course of an investigation.

Section 6: Responding to Cases of COVID-19

If one or more cases of COVID-19 is identified among workers or crew, immediate action must be taken to prevent or limit further spread in the worksite. Actions include isolation and/or quarantine of sick and exposed workers, reporting to the appropriate authorities, and cleaning/sanitizing the workplace.

Employers should identify appropriate isolation/quarantine facilities in advance. For questions about requirements for an appropriate isolation/quarantine facility for facilities, employers are encouraged to reach out to the local health jurisdiction of the intended isolation/quarantine facility.

Note that LHJs and DOH have limited capacity to meet isolation/quarantine needs. Employers should develop plans for isolation/quarantine of all staff that do not rely on public health facilities. L&I has a document that outlines [temporary housing standards for workers](#). Further details regarding isolation and quarantine housing are listed below. [Additionally, the CDC guidance for agricultural employers](#) includes information on isolation and quarantine housing. Employers can also contact local health jurisdictions for recommendations on isolation and quarantine housing.

1. Employers should send home any workers who are considered contacts of a person with COVID-19 (based on having been within 6 feet for 15 minutes or more) and direct them to quarantine themselves for 14 days from the date of their last exposure. While CDC offers guidance on [shortened quarantine options](#), a 14-day quarantine should be maintained for workers living in congregate, temporary farmworker housing and workers whose job roles limit physical distancing. Employers can consult with local

health jurisdictions to determine if a subset of workers can be offered shorter quarantine options (such as in lower-risk settings for transmission), though a 14-day remains the preferred option for all workers.

- a. In critical workforce sectors, there may be exceptional situations in which exposed workers without symptoms may continue working according to CDC guidance and [DOSH directive 1.70](#). This should only occur when necessary to ensure continuity of operations of essential functions, and when all efforts to replace the exposed worker(s) have been exhausted. This should rarely be the case in agricultural settings; this guidance is meant to apply in situations such as when cessation of operation of a facility may cause serious harm or danger to public health or safety. Of note, this should not apply to normal crop processing functions, such as picking of fruit, packing and sorting of fruit, etc. It should only apply in situations in which the absence of an individual employee would prevent the function of the entire operation or compromise worker safety. Local health jurisdictions also have authority to limit or prohibit exposed workers from returning to work. If an exposed worker must continue to work during quarantine, all of the following steps must be taken in the work site:
 - i. Daily pre-screening at home for symptoms and measurement of temperature (before an employee leaves home and enters the work site; further detail available at <https://lni.wa.gov/safety-health/safety-rules/enforcement-policies/DD170.pdf>)
 - ii. Daily workplace symptom screening for all workers
 - iii. Monitoring of employees in the workplace. [Per CDC guidance](#), employees should self-monitor under the supervision of their employer's occupational health program or their workplace COVID-19 coordinator or team. Employers without onsite occupational health resources should contact their local health jurisdiction regarding an appropriate monitoring plan. Workers who develop symptoms should be sent home immediately.
 - iv. Properly fitting cloth face coverings or masks are used by all workers.
 - v. Physical distancing measures are in place; if a worker's job role limits physical distancing, then other control measures must be in place. Employers should also stagger break times and ensure that workers do not congregate during breaks.
 - vi. Cleaning/disinfection of the workspace occurs per state guidance.
 - vii. Employers should improve ventilation and increase air exchanges as much as possible.
 - viii. Workers should not share headsets or other objects that are near the mouth or nose.
 - ix. Some local health jurisdictions also require consultation and approval from the local health jurisdiction prior to exposed workers returning to work during quarantine. Employers who are considering asking exposed workers to return to work based on the above guidance should contact

- their local health jurisdiction to determine whether additional consultation is required.
- b. Employers should contact their local health jurisdiction for questions about these policies.
2. Employers must notify their workers that a case has been identified at the worksite without naming the person who tested positive.
 - a. Inform workers that they may have been exposed to someone who has tested positive for the virus that causes COVID-19. It is appropriate to give details such as: dates shifts the person worked, locations within the worksite, etc.
 - b. Remind exposed workers of symptoms of COVID-19 (See Section 3 – Education) and ask them to report any symptoms that develop while they are working.
 - c. Instruct workers that if symptoms develop at home, they should not report to their next shift. Instead direct them to notify the appropriate point of contact in the workplace (such as their supervisor, HR personnel, or the designated COVID-19 contact at the worksite).
 3. Reference [L&I](#) and their recommendations and requirements for [Agricultural COVID-19 Requirements](#).

Isolation

1. Implement immediate isolation for any person who tests positive via diagnostic test for COVID-19, whether they are symptomatic or asymptomatic.
 - a. Any worker who is isolating in employer provided spaces should have daily medical checks arranged by the employer to ensure that the worker does not need additional medical evaluation or treatment.
 - b. Isolation may be at home as long as the following conditions are met:
 - i. Worker can be transported to their home without using public transportation, carpooling and ride-sharing.
 - ii. The infected worker can maintain isolation at home without infecting others in the home. Local health jurisdictions can provide guidance on whether the home meets criteria for safe isolation.
 - iii. Worker receives education about symptom monitoring and what to do if symptoms worsen.
 - iv. The local health jurisdiction where the worker will isolate is notified in advance of the worker being allowed to travel.
 - c. Isolation may be at a hotel or other designated facility, as long the following conditions are met:
 - i. The employer has made prior arrangements to make sure that the hotel or other designated facility is available and meets below requirements when there is a possibility that it will be needed.
 - ii. The facility or hotel is set up to allow isolation and has established policies to support isolation of people who test positive for COVID-19.
 - iii. Isolated workers must follow facility or hotel policies.

- iv. Isolated workers have a separate entrance from that for the general public.
 - v. Isolated workers should not share a room with someone who has NOT tested positive for COVID-19.
 - vi. Workers remain in their room as much as possible.
 - vii. Workers are required to wear a mask anytime they leave their room.
 - viii. All workers' needs are provided. L&I has a document that outlines [temporary housing standards for workers](#). The needs include:
 - 1. Basic living standards – bed and bedding, lights, heat, running water, toilet and bathing facilities, laundry, garbage service.
 - 2. Meals that accommodate dietary restrictions (gluten free, vegetarian, no pork, etc.).
 - 3. Daily symptom screening, healthcare consultation, and access to treatment and testing as necessary.
2. Discontinuing isolation:
- a. Workers who are symptomatic for COVID-19 may discontinue isolation under the following conditions:
 - i. At least **10 days have passed since symptoms started**, and
 - ii. The worker has not had a fever for at least 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medications) and,
 - iii. Other symptoms have improved.
 - b. Workers who tested positive but never developed symptoms may discontinue isolation after **10 days from their first positive PCR, molecular or antigen test**.
 - c. According to the CDC, a test-based strategy is no longer recommended to determine when to discontinue isolation for workers in non-healthcare settings. For more information, visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/disposition-in-home-patients.html>

Quarantine

- 1. Implement quarantine for any individuals who have close contact with a confirmed case.
- 2. Quarantine should last for 14 days from the date of their last exposure to the confirmed case or cases.
 - a. Monitored Quarantine: Quarantine for exposed workers may be at a hotel or other designated facility, as long the following conditions are met:
 - i. The facility or hotel is set up to allow quarantine and has established policies to support quarantine of people who may have been exposed to COVID-19.
 - ii. Quarantined workers must follow facility or hotel policies.
 - iii. Quarantined worker(s) can be transported to the quarantine facility without using public or commercial transportation.
 - iv. Quarantined worker(s) wear an appropriate cloth properly fit face covering or mask at all times while travelling to quarantine location.
 - v. Quarantined worker(s) should be quarantined in a single-occupancy room if possible.

- vi. If single-occupancy quarantine rooms are not available:
 1. Limit the number of people sharing rooms in a quarantine setting.
 2. If workers must be quarantined together, avoid creating quarantine groups of more than ten workers in congregate settings (such as bunk houses).
 3. Ensure that quarantined workers are not sharing rooms with people who are on isolation after a positive COVID-19 test.
- vii. Facility has a separate entrance from the general public for the quarantined workers.
- viii. Workers should remain in their room/quarantine accommodations unless they need to leave for medical care.
- ix. Workers are required to wear a properly fit cloth face covering or mask anytime they leave their room, unless they are actively eating, drinking, or performing personal hygiene.
 1. Smoking is bad for individual's health and not recommended. If smoke breaks are occurring, then a physically distant place to smoke should be set up. Individuals cannot be without a mask within 6 feet of another in a designated smoking site. Sites should be limited to 2 people at a time, physically distanced at least 6 ft apart. If possible, plexiglass barriers between the 2 people should be put in place.
- x. All quarantined workers' needs are provided. L&I has a document that outlines [temporary housing standards for workers](#). The needs include:
 1. Basic living standards – bed and bedding, toilet, lights, heat, running water, bathing facilities, laundry, garbage service
 2. Accommodation for dietary restrictions (gluten free, vegetarian, no pork, etc.).
 3. Daily symptom screening, healthcare consultation, as well as access to treatment and testing as necessary.
- b. Controlled Quarantine: Quarantine may be at home as long as the following conditions are met:
 - i. Quarantined worker(s) can be transported to their home(s) using safe transportation and without using public transportation.
 - ii. Quarantined worker(s) wear an appropriate cloth face covering or mask at all times while travelling to quarantine location.
 - iii. Worker receives education about symptom monitoring and what to do if symptoms occur.
 - iv. The local health jurisdiction where the worker will quarantine is notified in advance of the worker being allowed to travel.
- c. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced guidance that fully vaccinated persons with an exposure to someone with COVID-19 are **not** required to quarantine if they meet all of the following criteria:

- Are fully vaccinated (at least two weeks have passed since the final vaccine dose, meaning the second dose for vaccines that require two doses, and the only dose for a single-dose vaccine).
- Have not had symptoms since current COVID-19 exposure.

Fully vaccinated persons should still watch for symptoms for 14 days after their exposure. They should also continue to wear masks, practice social distancing, and keep their social circles small. An exception to the guidance is that vaccinated inpatients and residents in healthcare settings should continue to quarantine following an exposure to someone with COVID-19. Persons who do not meet both criteria should continue to follow [current quarantine guidance](#) after exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19.

- d. Employers should contact their local health jurisdiction for questions about these policies. CDC and Washington guidance for vaccinated persons will likely be updated as further data become available.

Cleaning and disinfection after a COVID-19 case is identified

After a COVID-19 case is identified in a workplace, cleaning and disinfection should be performed in the worksite to prevent transmission to others from contaminated objects and surfaces.

1. Close off areas used by the person who is sick.
 - a. Companies do not necessarily need to close operations, if they can close off affected areas.
2. Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the area.
3. Wait 24 hours before you clean or disinfect. If 24 hours is not feasible, wait as long as possible.
4. Clean and disinfect all areas used by the person who is sick, such as staterooms, bathrooms, common areas, work equipment, and shared electronic equipment like tablets, touch screens, keyboards, remote controls, and automated teller machines.
5. Workers performing cleaning/sanitation should be wearing appropriate PPE at all times.
6. Vacuum the space if needed. Use vacuum equipped with high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter, if available.
 - a. Do not vacuum a room or space that has people in it. Wait until the room or space is empty to vacuum, such as at night, for common spaces, or during the day for private rooms.
 - b. Consider temporarily turning off room fans and the central HVAC system that services the room or space, so that particles that escape from vacuuming will not circulate throughout the facility.
7. Once the area has been appropriately disinfected, it can be opened for use. Workers without close contact with the person who is sick can return to work immediately after disinfection.
8. If more than 7 days since the person who is sick visited or used the facility, additional cleaning and disinfection is not necessary. Continue routine cleaning and disinfection.

This includes everyday practices that businesses and communities normally use to maintain a healthy environment.

9. The CDC's website has more information about [cleaning and disinfection for COVID-19](#).

Section 7: Reporting Cases and Working with Public Health

In the event of one or more COVID-19 cases on a worksite, the company will need to cooperate with LHJs and/or DOH, as well as other federal agencies.

All cases of COVID-19 and outbreaks must be reported to the LHJ per Washington state law ([WAC 296-307-16190](#), [WAC 246-101](#)). Employers must also report all [work-related hospitalizations and fatalities to L&I](#).

Background

All employers must cooperate with public health authorities, per the Governor's proclamation ([20-25.12](#)) issued on January 11, 2021. This proclamation requires all employers to (a) cooperate with public health authorities in the investigation of cases, suspected cases, outbreaks, and suspected outbreaks of COVID-19; (b) cooperate with the implementation of infection control measures, including but not limited to isolation and quarantine and following the cleaning guidelines set by the CDC to deep clean and sanitize; (c) comply with all public health authority orders and directives; and (d) comply with all L&I interpretive guidance, regulations, and rules and L&I-administered statutes.

As per the Governor's proclamation ([20-25.12](#)), employers are also required to cooperate with public health authorities by: (e) returning phone calls within 4 hours; (f) meeting with public health officials promptly and answering questions from public health officials to help determine if and where transmission might be occurring in the work place; (g) sharing lists of employees with their contact information and other relevant documents, if requested; (h) allowing immediate and unfettered access to any work place and facility, as well as to all employees without threatened or actual retaliation against those employees; (i) following public health recommendations for testing and disease control measures; and (j) engaging in respectful and productive conversations regarding public health interactions.

How to report cases of COVID-19

4. **Employers are required by law to report probable or confirmed cases of COVID-19 that occur at the work site or at employer-provided housing.** Employers must make the report to the local health jurisdiction as required under WAC 296-307-16190.
 - a. If workers have worked at multiple locations, or if the worker lives in one jurisdiction and works in another jurisdiction, employers may have to report cases to multiple local health departments.
 - b. A list of all local health jurisdiction contacts can be found here: <https://www.doh.wa.gov/AboutUs/PublicHealthSystem/LocalHealthJurisdictions>
5. Employers are required by law to cooperate with any case investigation or contact tracing efforts undertaken by the local health jurisdiction.

- a. The local health officer has authority to compel a facility to undergo an investigation as outlined in WAC 246-101-105 (<https://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=246-101-505>.)
 - b. The Local Health Jurisdiction may open a formal case investigation and contact tracing process coordinated with both the employer as well as DOH.
6. When an employer is notified of one or more cases of COVID-19 in employees, the employer should:
- a. Take immediate action to identify workers who may have had prolonged contact with the cases (persons with COVID-19).
 - b. Work with the local health jurisdiction to decide who will lead a worksite or housing unit contact investigation.
 - c. Collect the following information related to each person with a confirmed cases in the workplace or housing unit:
 - i. Name
 - ii. Date of birth
 - iii. Race/Ethnicity
 - iv. Type of COVID Test
 - v. Date of positive test
 - vi. Date of symptom onset
 - vii. Home address
 - viii. Working phone number
 - ix. Preferred language spoken
 - x. If the positive case has traveled recently, details of recent travel, including type of travel, dates, airline & flight number
 - xi. Isolation facility name, address, and phone number
 - xii. Information about any close contacts of the case(s)
 - xiii. Work details, including dates worked, shifts, and locations within the plant or farm
 - xiv. **Employers should use [this Microsoft Excel list](#)**, called a “line list,” to collect and report information about outbreaks or potential outbreaks of COVID-19 in the workplace.

Working with public health

Employers are required by law to cooperate with any case investigation or contact tracing efforts undertaken by LHJs and/or DOH.

- 1. The LHJs and/or DOH may open a formal case investigation and contact tracing process coordinated with the employer.
- 2. When one or more cases is identified associated with a workplace the employer should:
 - a. Take immediate action to identify workers who may have had close contact with the confirmed case (being within 6 feet for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period) from two days before symptom onset or 2 days before test was obtained until the case was isolated.
 - b. Work with LHJs or DOH if there is a worksite contact investigation.

- c. After the initial report is made to LHJs or to DOH, including a list of cases, continue to report additional cases as they occur.
3. Employers must notify their workers that a case has been identified at the worksite without naming the person who tested positive.
 - a. Inform workers that they may have been exposed to someone who has tested positive for the virus that causes COVID-19. It is appropriate to give details such as: dates, shifts the person worked, locations within the worksite, etc.
 - b. Remind exposed workers of symptoms of COVID-19 (see [Section 3](#)) and ask them to report any symptoms that develop during post exposure quarantine.
 - c. Instruct workers that if symptoms develop at home, they should not report to their next shift. Instead direct them to notify the appropriate point of contact in the workplace (such as their supervisor, HR personnel, or the designated COVID-19 contact at the worksite).

Section 8: Additional resources

CDC and other federal guidance and requirements:

- **CDC COVID-19 website:** www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/
- **Symptoms of Coronavirus:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>
- **CDC Guidance for Agriculture Workers and Employers:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-agricultural-workers.html>
- **CDC Guidance For Meat and Poultry Processing Workers and Employers:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/meat-poultry-processing-workers-employers.html>
- **NIOSH Coronavirus Disease 2019 website:** www.cdc.gov/niosh/emres/2019_ncov.html
- **OSHA Coronavirus Page:** <https://www.osha.gov/coronavirus>
- **OSHA Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19:** <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf>
- **CDC Recommendations for Cloth Face Covers:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html>
- **CDC Tools for Cross-Cultural Communication and Language Access:** <https://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/culture.html>
- **CDC Resources for Shared or Congregate Housing Facilities:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/sharedcongregate-house/index.html>
- **CDC guidelines for Cleaning and Disinfection for Non-emergency Transport Vehicles:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/disinfecting-transport-vehicles.html>
- **EPA List N: Disinfectants for use against SARS-COV-2:** <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>

Washington state guidance:

- **Washington DOH COVID-19 website:** <https://www.doh.wa.gov/emergencies/coronavirus>
- **Local Health Jurisdiction Contacts:** <https://www.doh.wa.gov/AboutUs/PublicHealthSystem/LocalHealthJurisdictions>
- **COVID-19 education materials in 26 languages:** <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/NovelCoronavirusOutbreak2020/HealthEducation>
- **Guidance for Daily COVID-19 Screening of Staff and Visitors:** <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/Employervisitorscreeningguidance.pdf>
- **DOSH Directive: General Coronavirus Prevention Under Stay Home-Stay Healthy Order:** <https://lni.wa.gov/safety-health/safety-rules/enforcement-policies/DD170.pdf>
- **Washington Department of Labor & Industry (L&I) Coronavirus (COVID-19) Prevention in Agriculture and Related Industries:** <https://www.lni.wa.gov/forms-publications/F414-165-000.pdf>
- **Washington Department of Labor & Industry (L&I) Agriculture COVID-19 Prevention Requirements:** <https://www.governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/COVID19AgriculturalSafetyPlan.pdf>
- **Washington Department of Labor & Industry (LNI) Food Processing-Warehouse Coronavirus (COVID-19) Fact Sheet:** <https://www.lni.wa.gov/forms-publications/F414-166-000.pdf>
- **Washington Coronavirus Hazard Considerations for Employers (except COVID-19 care in hospitals & clinics):** Face coverings, masks, and respirator choices: <https://www.lni.wa.gov/agency/docs/wacoronavirushazardconsiderationsemployers.pdf>
- **DOH and L&I Joint Rules CR-103E Adoption Language link to the L&I version (same as DOH):** <https://lni.wa.gov/rulemaking-activity/AO20-09/2009CR103EAdoption.pdf> **L&I Workers' Compensation Coverage and Coronavirus (COVID-19) Common Questions:** <https://lni.wa.gov/agency/outreach/workers-compensation-coverage-and-coronavirus-covid-19-common-questions>
- **Workers' Compensation Coverage and Coronavirus (COVID-19) Common Questions:** <https://lni.wa.gov/agency/outreach/workers-compensation-coverage-and-coronavirus-covid-19-common-questions>
- **L&I Safety and Health Consolation Program:** <https://www.lni.wa.gov/safety-health/preventing-injuries-illnesses/request-consultation/>

Section 8: Example “Line List” for reporting cases of COVID-19

Employers should use [this Microsoft Excel list](#), called a “line list,” to collect and report information about outbreaks or potential outbreaks of COVID-19 in the workplace.

More COVID-19 Information and Resources

Stay up-to-date on the [current COVID-19 situation in Washington](#), [Governor Inslee’s proclamations](#), [symptoms](#), [how it spreads](#), and [how and when people should get tested](#). See our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for more information.

A person’s race/ethnicity or nationality does not, itself, put them at greater risk of COVID-19. However, data are revealing that communities of color are being disproportionately impacted

by COVID-19. This is due to the effects of racism, and in particular, structural racism, that leaves some groups with fewer opportunities to protect themselves and their communities. [Stigma will not help to fight the illness](#). Share only accurate information to keep rumors and misinformation from spreading.

- [WA State Department of Health 2019 Novel Coronavirus Outbreak \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [WA State Coronavirus Response \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Find Your Local Health Department or District](#)
- [CDC Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Stigma Reduction Resources](#)

Have more questions? Call our COVID-19 Information hotline: **1-800-525-0127**

Monday – 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., Tuesday – Sunday and [observed state holidays](#), 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. For interpretative services, **press #** when they answer and **say your language**. For questions about your own health, COVID-19 testing, or testing results, please contact a health care provider.

To request this document in another format, call 1-800-525-0127. Deaf or hard of hearing customers, please call 711 ([Washington Relay](#)) or email civil.rights@doh.wa.gov.