



## County of Fresno

### DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

December 16, 2020

RE: Agricultural Industry COVID-19 Safety Guidelines

The new strain of coronavirus (COVID-19) is a respiratory disease that can rapidly spread in crowded settings and can lead to serious illness or death. Fresno County agriculture workers, who grow, harvest and pack the nation's food supply, have been significantly affected by COVID-19.

As one of the leading agricultural producing counties in the nation, Fresno County has up to 70,000 farmworkers on the job at any given time. This population suffers from significant health disparities, which increases their risk of developing adverse health complications of COVID-19. As the pandemic continues to take a heavy toll on these essential workers, it is increasingly clear that we need to secure our food supply chain and protect the health and safety of this vital workforce.

Employers play a significant role and responsibility for the safety of their workers. The Fresno County Department of Public Health (FCDPH) leadership in collaboration with the agricultural industry has developed the following health and safety guidelines to help employers better protect their workforce during the COVID-19 pandemic. These guidelines enhance existing food and safety regulations related to worker safety and hygiene.

The following document contains guidelines for agricultural employers to ensure the safety of workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thank you,

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**FRESNO COUNTY  
AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY COVID-19 SAFETY GUIDELINES**

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## 1. Employee Safety/Hygiene:

- Employees should wash/sanitize their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before work, before eating, using the restroom, and after work.
- Hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol should be provided where soap and water are not available.
- Single use paper towels should be provided.
- All people present at a worksite should keep at least 6 feet distance from others. Physical distancing requirements also applicable during breaks and meals.
- Stagger breaks if feasible to ensure physical distancing.
- Provide space for breaks/lunch that allow for physical distancing to be maintained. Outdoor dining is preferred.
- Face masks are required while at work unless eating or drinking.
- Avoid meetings of more than 10 people. Maintain 6 feet distance and convene outside if possible.
- Limit group gatherings inside facilities.
- If 6 feet physical distancing is not possible inside the workplace, then cleanable solid partitions should be installed between employees.
- Organize workers in small groups so that if there is an exposure, fewer workers will need to quarantine. Ideally, groups that travel or live together should be on the same team.
- Clean frequently touched areas such as doorknobs, counters, and restrooms.
- If your company offers employee housing, employers should follow above guidelines in addition to complying with state and local safety requirements.

## 2. Appoint a COVID-19 Workplace Coordinator Who Will:

- Create and implement a written [COVID-19 prevention program](#) tailored for your business according to Cal/OSHA regulations, which includes developing procedures to identify COVID-19 positive cases and exposures in the workplace.
- Manage employee's *health assessment* upon arrival at work. This includes asking the following screening questions prior to employees entering the workplace:
  - Have they been exposed to anyone known to have COVID-19?
  - Do they have any of the following symptoms: cough, fever 100.4 F or higher, difficulty breathing, chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, recent loss of taste or smell, congestion, nausea or vomiting, or diarrhea?
  - If answer yes to any of the above, do not allow employees to enter the workplace and advise them regarding isolation procedures and COVID-19 testing resources. See section 6.
- Check temperature with non-contact thermometer.
- Coordinate worksite screening tests – See section 5.
- Ensure that adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) supplies are available for employee safety such as face masks.
- Ensure ready access to hand sanitizers at workstations, break areas, and other settings where employees may congregate.
- Reconfigure traffic flow to be one way with markers wherever feasible to better allow distancing and avoid groups forming at entrance and exits.
- Place educational materials regarding COVID-19 safety and hygiene practices in strategic locations.

- Offer modified work options for employees with underlying medical conditions who are at increased risk of severe COVID-19 related illness.

### 3. Employer Provided Transportation:

- Perform *health assessments* before entering vehicle (see section 2).
- All occupants of the vehicle should wash their hands before entering and after exiting the vehicle.
  - Scrub with soap and water for 20 seconds if available. If not, use hand sanitizer with at least 60% ethanol.
  - Keep hand sanitizer bottles available in the vehicle.
- All occupants of the vehicle should wear a face mask.
- Place passengers in teams and ride with the same teams every day.
- Per [Cal/OSHA standards](#), occupants must be separated by 3 feet in all directions during the operation of the vehicle.
- Group passengers by those who live together and/or those in the same crews.
- Increase the number of vehicles and the frequency of trips as possible, to limit the number of people in a vehicle at one time.
- Move fresh air through the vehicle by opening windows when possible. If using air conditioning, use outside air. Do not recycle air from the inside of the vehicle.
- Transportation vehicles should be cleaned and disinfected between users.

### 4. Environmental Cleaning in High Traffic Areas:

- No-touch trash receptacles.
- Foot controls at wash stations if possible.
- No-touch access to antiseptic wipes at places that require touching (time clock, microwaves, refrigerator, etc.).
- For sanitizing, use products from the EPA list of disinfectants: <https://cfpub.epa.gov/giwiz/disinfectants/index.cfm>
- Use disposable gloves while cleaning - and only use once.
- Cleaning should focus on high touch areas, bathrooms, and shared workspaces.
- Cleaning after known COVID-19 positive employee identified should be done immediately:
  - Use full PPE while cleaning.
- Close off area until fully cleaned.
- Ventilate area if possible – open windows and doors if inside.

### 5. COVID-19 Worksite Screening Testing Guidelines:

In order to support the safe operation of agriculture facilities in Fresno County, the FCDPH strongly recommends a program of COVID-19 screening testing in all Fresno County agriculture workplaces. Details of this testing guidance are outlined below.

1. It is recommended that all agriculture facilities conduct COVID-19 screening testing of a representative sample of 10% of onsite personnel every two weeks. Agriculture facilities will randomly select which of their employees will be tested to ensure a representative cross-section of agriculture employees is being tested. Regular screening testing is important to quickly identify cases, prevent major outbreaks (see section 7), and safely keep agriculture facilities open. Please contact FCDPH at (559) 600-4063 or email [covidag@fresnocountyca.gov](mailto:covidag@fresnocountyca.gov) if you need assistance setting up a screening testing program in your workplace.

2. All workplace screening testing should be laboratory polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing only. Self-swab, nasopharyngeal, and/or anterior nares (mid-nasal) may be utilized for specimen collection. Antigen and antibody tests are not appropriate for screening testing. By conventional definition, screening testing indicates that the individual is not symptomatic for COVID-19, have not been diagnosed with COVID-19 in the last month, and are not part of an outbreak or investigation (e.g. at high risk of having COVID-19 due to close contact with an infected person).

**Additional Notes:**

- a. As capacity allows, the FCDPH will provide no cost COVID-19 testing when existing contracted Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) clinical teams conducts the screening testing in the workplace. See FAQ #1 to learn how to access these testing resources for your employees.

**6. What should I do if one of my employees tests positive for COVID-19?**

Employers must take the following steps when a worker tests positive for COVID-19 or is exposed to the virus:

- A) Agricultural employers must excuse employees with COVID-19 from work until they have met all return to work criteria established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC](https://www.cdc.gov)).

For symptomatic patients, this includes:

- 1) Isolating for at least 10 days since COVID-19 symptoms first appeared\*
- 2) 24 hours with no fever, without the use of fever-reducing medications
- 3) COVID-19 symptoms are improving

\*If an employee has symptoms of COVID-19 and is evaluated by a health care provider and subsequently tests negative while symptomatic for COVID-19, OR if a health care provider determines that symptoms are not new or worsening based on a chronic medical condition OR if a health care provider has made an alternative diagnosis based on a diagnostic test such as a positive strep screen or a positive screen for influenza, the employee may stop isolation after improvement of symptoms for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medications.

Employees who test positive for COVID-19 but have no symptoms must isolate for 10 days since the date of their positive viral test.

- B) The FCDPH recommends that employers notify the department by calling (559) 600-4063 or email [covidag@fresnocountyca.gov](mailto:covidag@fresnocountyca.gov) as soon as possible after an employee has tested positive for COVID-19. This notification will assist the FCDPH's efforts to promptly track COVID-19 cases and help prevent COVID-19 workplace outbreaks (see section 7).

The employer will be asked to provide the FCDPH with the infected employee's:

- 1) Name
- 2) Contact information
- 3) Occupation
- 4) Worksite address and NAICS code
- 5) Date of positive COVID-19 test
- 6) Last day at workplace
- 7) Hospitalization and/or fatality status

Personal identifying information of employees who are COVID-19 positive, have COVID-19 symptoms, or have been exposed to the virus shall be kept confidential.

- C) Employers should notify employees within 24 hours that they had close contact with a COVID-19 positive employee (i.e. within 6 feet of a positive COVID-19 individual during their infectious period\* for 15 minutes or greater). Any employee that develops COVID-19 symptoms should be sent home immediately and get tested for COVID-19. See FAQ 1.

*\*Infectious period means the time a COVID-19 positive individual is infectious, as defined by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH).*

Employees that have been exposed and have no symptoms should quarantine for 10 days from the last known contact with a person positive with COVID-19, and:

- 1) Self-monitor for COVID-19 symptoms through day 14 and if symptoms occur, immediately self-isolate and contact their local public health department or health care provider and seek testing.
- 2) Adhere strictly to all recommended non-pharmaceutical interventions, including consistent use of face coverings and maintaining a distance of at least 6 feet from others, through day 14.

If there are no violations of local or state health officer orders for isolation or quarantine, the Division may, upon request, allow employees to return to work on the basis that the removal of an employee would create undue risk to a community's health and safety. In such cases, the employer shall develop, implement, and maintain effective control measures to prevent transmission in the workplace including providing isolation for the employee at the workplace and, if isolation is not possible, the use of respiratory protection in the workplace.

- D) Employers are required to provide their employees who test positive for COVID-19 or those who have been exposed with COVID-19 paid sick leave. More information can be found by calling the California Labor Commissioner's Office at (844) 522-6734.

Additional information about local resources including food and housing supports is available in Spanish. Your employee can call the Healthy Harvest program at (559) 710-2000. See FAQ 3.

## 7. What is a COVID-19 workplace outbreak?

Per Cal/OSHA, a workplace outbreak is defined as **3 or more positive COVID-19 cases\* among workers at the same worksite within a 14-day period. Once a workplace meets the definition of a COVID-19 outbreak, employers must:**

- 1) **Notify the FCDPH within 48 hours by calling** (559) 600-4063 or emailing [covidag@fresnocountyca.gov](mailto:covidag@fresnocountyca.gov) and also report any subsequent positive cases.
- 2) Comply with [Cal/OSHA's](#) additional restrictions and testing requirements. See FAQ 5.

*\*A COVID-19 positive case is anyone who has a positive viral test for COVID-19 (this includes PCR and antigen tests). This does not include the COVID-19 antibody test, which indicates past infection.*

## 8. Frequently Asked Questions:

### Q1. What should my employees do while waiting for their COVID-19 test results?

1. If your employee has COVID-19 symptoms, they must stay at home until they receive their test result.
2. If your employee has no COVID-19 symptoms, but got tested because they were in close contact with someone who has COVID-19, then see section 6, part C.
3. This does not apply to employees who were tested while asymptomatic, as part of a workplace's COVID-19 screening testing program (see section 5).

### Q2. How can I seek assistance with providing COVID-19 testing to my employees?

The FCDPH has contracted five (5) FQHCs to provide no-cost COVID-19 testing either in the workplace or at a community site. FQHCs will attempt to bill the individual's insurance for testing that is done at events. If the employee is uninsured, the FCDPH will be the payor of last resort.

To utilize FQHC's testing resources, employers can do one of the following:

1. Call (559) 575-3308 or email [covidtesting@fresnocountyca.gov](mailto:covidtesting@fresnocountyca.gov) to arrange worksite COVID-19 testing services. This method can help worksites comply with the FCDPH's COVID-19 screening testing guidelines.
2. Alternatively, employers can provide their workers with the FCDPH's website, which contains a monthly calendar of FQHC's no-cost community testing events. Many of these events are re-occurring, held on weekends, and located in rural areas in Fresno County. [www.fcdph.org/covid19testing](http://www.fcdph.org/covid19testing)

Other options to provide COVID-19 screening testing for your workers include creating an onsite testing program managed by the employer or utilizing other testing resources in the general community, such as:

3. California's no-cost OptumServe COVID-19 testing sites in Fresno County. [www.fcdph.org/covid19testing](http://www.fcdph.org/covid19testing)
4. Employees can also call their primary care doctor's office and make an appointment to request a COVID-19 test.

### Q3. How can I provide my employee with quarantine support?

The FCDPH in collaboration with California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) and other local community-based organizations developed The Healthy Harvest program, which provides temporary housing for agriculture workers who have tested positive for COVID-19 or are suspected of coming in contact with the virus. The Healthy Harvest provides agriculture workers with additional services such as: transportation to/from hotel, meals, wellness checks, and Spanish language support. For more information, call (559) 710-2000 or visit [www.thehealthyharvest.org](http://www.thehealthyharvest.org). (Español – [www.cosechasana.org](http://www.cosechasana.org)).

### Q4. Questions about AB 685?

[AB 685](#) (Chapter 84, Statutes of 2020) is a California law signed by Governor Newsom that will go into effect January 1, 2021. In brief, AB 685 requires all private and public employers in non-healthcare workplaces to follow all the above guidelines. In addition, AB 685 states:

- **California Department of Public Health (CDPH) will be required to publicly report information** on workplace outbreaks.
- Cal/OSHA is authorized to enforce citations, fines, or close workplaces if they are deemed to be imminent *COVID-19 hazards* (defined by [Cal/OSHA](#) as exposure to potentially infectious material that may contain SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19).
- For complete information regarding implementation and compliance with AB 685, please contact Fresno County's Cal/OSHA office by calling (559) 445-5301 or email [DOSHFresno@dir.ca.gov](mailto:DOSHFresno@dir.ca.gov)

#### **Q5. Questions about Cal/OSHA's COVID-19 Emergency Temporary Standards?**

Cal/OSHA released [emergency standards](#) on November 30, 2020.

- Employers can contact Cal/OSHA's free phone consultation services if they need assistance complying with the new standards. Facilities can call and ask COVID-19 related questions or alternatively request onsite guidance if preferred. The phone consultation service will maintain the confidentiality of the workplace. For more information, call Cal/OSHA's consultation services: (559) 445-6800, 1(800) 963-9424. <https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/consultation.html>
- Cal/OSHA also offers COVID-19 educational materials for workplaces: <https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/puborder.asp>

#### **Q6. Additional Help?**

If your workplace needs assistance adhering to any part of these agriculture guidelines or if you have other worksite safety related questions that were not addressed in these recommendations, please call the FCDPH at (559) 600-4063 or email [covidag@fresnocountyca.gov](mailto:covidag@fresnocountyca.gov) so that we can better help your organization.