



---

## Food Processing Response Toolkit

### Make a Plan for COVID-19 Mitigation in the Workplace

The Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA), the Oregon Health Authority (OHA), Oregon Occupational Safety and Health (Oregon OSHA), and your local public health authority (LPHA) encourage you to make a plan for mitigating the spread of COVID-19 in your workplace. This should include an emergency response plan of how to respond if a worker tests positive. The plan should consider the implementation of a workplace coordinator who will be responsible for COVID-19 assessment, implementation, and control planning. The workplace coordinators and management should be aware of and follow all applicable county, state, and federal regulations including public health agency guidelines. Worksite assessments by appropriately trained personnel to identify COVID-19 risks and mitigation strategies should be done periodically.

The purpose of this toolkit is to provide guidance in developing your plan.

#### Step 1: Protect the Current Workforce

##### A. Screen and monitor workers:

Screening workers for symptoms is an optional strategy that employers may use. If implemented for all workers, policies and procedures for screening should be developed. Consider review of the [CDC Frequently Asked Question webpage](#), including the section regarding “Should we be screening for COVID-19 Symptoms”.

- Incorporate physical distancing practices into a staging area that leads to screening station(s).
- Appoint a screening monitor (or multiple if needed). Provide information in multiple languages as appropriate.
- Consider worker privacy, physical distancing, and/or physical barriers when designing screening station(s).
- Provide appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) based on screening station design to eliminate or minimize your screener’s exposure to the virus.
- Provide training on thermometer use, appropriate use of PPE, and physical distancing protocol for screeners.
  - Consider checking temperatures of workers at the start of each shift. Identify anyone with a fever of 100.4°F / 38°C or greater (follow the thermometer manufacturer’s instructions for use).
    - One method is to use a [non-contact infrared thermometer](#) designed for taking peoples temperatures.
    - If a thermometer contacts a worker, implement appropriate cleaning between each use following the manufacturer’s recommendation.
  - Safely and respectfully ask workers if they are feeling sick or have had close contact with sick individuals, specifically symptoms such as:
    - Fever
    - Cough
    - Sore throat
    - Shortness of breath
    - New loss of taste or smell
    - Symptoms commonly associated with foodborne illnesses (vomiting, diarrhea, sore throat with fever, jaundice)

- If records related to screening are kept, worker privacy and [record retention](#) should be considered.
- Develop policies to exclude workers identified as symptomatic from the workplace.
  - Consider the reporting of symptomatic worker's contact information to your [LPHA](#).
  - Provide handouts or training materials related to resources for sick workers (e.g. sick leave, FMLA, etc.).
  - Include procedures for workers to report contact with a suspected or confirmed coronavirus case.
- Conduct training for supervisory staff regarding monitoring and reporting of symptoms in the workplace.

## **B. Direct sick workers to stay home:**

- Actively send sick workers home if they are at work and encourage sick workers to stay home. Advise them to contact their health care provider for testing.
- Review sick leave policies to ensure that workers are not penalized for taking sick leave due to COVID-19. Consider advancing future sick leave or allowing workers to donate sick leave to each other.
- Implement a system for workers to alert a supervisor in a timely manner if they or a coworker are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms.
- Monitor absenteeism to watch for concerning trends and implement plans to cover essential tasks.
- Develop policies for a response in the event that the LPHA notifies your human resources (HR) contact of a worker who has tested positive for COVID-19. Your HR department should inform anyone who has come in close contact with the worker of their possible exposure while maintaining confidentiality requirements.
- Work with state, local, tribal, and/or territorial health officials to facilitate the identification of other exposed and potentially exposed individuals, such as coworkers in a plant.
- Notify coworkers who have had close contact with a worker sick with coronavirus, without identifying the sick worker.
- The LPHA in conjunction with ODA, OHA, and the Oregon OSHA consultative branch will work with the firm to ensure they are implementing any needed closure for cleaning and disinfection to stop the further spread of COVID-19 amongst the workforce.
- Home isolation and testing policies should be developed in order to determine a path for workers to return. Follow CDC or OHA guidelines when they become available.

## **C. Physical distancing:**

- Appoint a physical distancing officer with adequate authority to enforce policies, consider that disciplinary actions may be necessary.
- Monitor physical distancing at work stations, in common areas, entryways, at the time clock, in the administration offices, in break rooms and restrooms, at handwashing and hand sanitizing stations, in addition to parking lots.
  - Stagger work schedules so workers don't crowd each other when they arrive and leave work.
  - Stagger break and lunch times to reduce the gathering of groups of workers in limited areas.
  - Consider cohorting (grouping together) workers to limit cross-contact.
  - Consider written records of worker job assignments to simplify contact tracing.
  - Consider rearranging tables and chairs in break rooms to meet the minimum physical distancing requirements.
  - Use signage and floor markings to manage flow with physical distancing.
  - Consider moving equipment or supplies to reduce areas of travel around the work place.

- Options for workstations with close proximity
  - Vacate every other 'like task' worker station on production lines to allow physical distancing.
    - [How to Align Manufacturing Workstations, if feasible](#)
  - Reduce production speed to reduce the number of workers needed on the line. Running multiple shifts may allow for additional production.
  - Extend production lines so workers can be farther apart.
  - Consider installing physical barriers such as plexiglass, strip curtains or other barriers that are effective in stopping the spread of COVID-19.
- Check ventilation in work areas to make sure fans do not blow from one worker directly onto another worker while being mindful of heat hazards.
- Limit entry of visitors, contractors, and off-shift workers to essential business only. Keep a record of visitors and train them about your company's site-specific coronavirus safety procedures, including physical distancing, personal hygiene, and PPE requirements.
- Stagger shipping and receiving orders to reduce potential exposure of transport personnel.
- Encourage the use of face masks, including physical distancing in carpools and during other daily activities outside of work.

#### **D. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):**

- Educate workers on the importance of wearing a [face mask](#) in addition to practicing physical distancing. Consider implementing a policy requiring their use in the workplace.
- Consider supplying face shields that wrap around the sides of the wearer's face and extend below the chin.
- Reusable PPE such as face shields, aprons, gloves, and safety glasses must be cleaned and disinfected daily and stored in a clean location.
  - Follow disinfectant labels to ensure that the proper concentration is used.
  - PPE should not be taken home and never shared.
  - Reusable PPE should be cleaned, using soap and water, then [disinfected](#) between uses.
  - Follow disinfectant labels to ensure that the proper concentration is used.
  - Disinfected PPE should be protected during storage and distribution.
- Contact your LPHA (see contacts section) for assistance if you are unable to obtain face masks through your usual vendors.

#### **E. Handwashing, sanitizers and sanitation:**

- Designate a worker to ensure bathrooms and handwashing sinks are consistently stocked with warm, potable water, soap, and paper towels.
- Provide hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol. Encourage the use of hand sanitizer after handwashing.
- Provide supplemental hand sanitizer stations, wipes or towelettes, or clean water and soap in portable containers to facilitate more frequent hand washing after handling objects touched by others.
- Provide access to tissues, trash bins, and plastic bags for proper disposal of used tissues and other personal care products.

#### **F. Cleaning, sanitation, and disinfection of surfaces:**

- Identify high touch surfaces including, but not limited to: door handles, faucets, toilet handles, light switches, countertops, chairs, tables, time clock areas, vehicles, equipment, machinery and tools, and physical barriers such as plexiglass.
  - Appoint designated sanitation worker(s) to continuously clean and disinfect surfaces on a significantly-increased schedule. Clean and sanitize all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace at least twice per day.

- Refer to [ODA disinfectants for food contact surfaces](#) that are effective against COVID-19 and follow the label instructions regarding contact time.
- Be sure to follow label directions when FOOD CONTACT SURFACES are sanitized. Many chemical disinfectants require a follow up water rinse when they are used before applying sanitizers at the appropriate concentration.
- In many cases disinfection compounds may be the same as sanitizing compounds but at higher concentration. Disinfecting and sanitizing are not the same. Disinfecting refers to killing nearly 100% of germs on surfaces at much higher concentrations. Sanitizing refers to lowering the number of germs on a food contact surface to a level that meets safe public health standards.
- Always wash and rinse visible dirt/debris from equipment before sanitizing.
- Ensure workers use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) for work tasks.

## Step 2: Prepare the Current Workforce

### A. Educate workers and supervisors, providing information in multiple languages as needed:

- Inform workers of the measures being taken to keep them safe, such as changes to accommodate distancing, cleaning, and disinfection.
- Collaborate with local community groups and labor unions to effectively communicate important COVID-19 information.
- Share information on how everyone can contribute to the mitigation of the spread of the coronavirus at work, including steps being taken in the workplace to establish social distancing, frequent hand washing, and other precautions including food safety practices.
- Hang posters/signs in appropriate languages from the health authorities (CDC, OSHA, OHA, LPHA) about how to prevent coronavirus transmission such as:
  - Proper respiratory etiquette, including covering coughs and sneezes and not touching eyes, noses, or mouths with unwashed hands or gloves.
    - [Cough and sneeze etiquette](#)
  - Appropriate handwashing with clean running water and soap for at least 20 seconds. Use paper towels to dry hands.
    - [When and How to Wash Your Hands](#)
    - Wash hands throughout the day and especially when arriving at work, before entering the production area, before and after eating or drinking or using tobacco, after using the toilet, after using a cell phone, after coughing or sneezing or touching the face, and after touching any surfaces or tool touched by others.
  - Appropriate use of PPE.
    - [Use of Respirators, Facemasks, and Cloth Face Coverings](#)
- Communicate and reinforce safety messages and updates by frequently using methods that are appropriate for the target audience. Consider language and cultural needs of all workers.
  - Talk with workers about changes and seek their input regarding other potential protections that can be considered. Incorporation of this topic into pre-shift / toolbox conversations are highly encouraged.
  - Provide workers with information on how coronavirus can be spread, symptoms, and best practices to minimize exposure to it.
  - Offer education for workers to recognize how to minimize exposure to COVID-19 when not at work.
- Emphasize cleaning and sanitizing of frequently touched items that may not be addressed by sanitation crew activity, such as cell phones and tools.

## **B. Cross-training, standard operating procedures, and contingency plans:**

- Create or review and revise standard operating procedure documents (SOPs), which provide straightforward, step-by-step descriptions of necessary tasks, including supplies and tools required. Ensure they are written in plain language.
  - [Standard Operating Procedures video \(resource\)](#)
- Physically store printed SOPs in easily accessible, key locations.
  - Consider supplementing SOPs with videos of jobs or processes to clearly demonstrate steps.
- Provide cross-training opportunities for key positions to ensure support of critical tasks.
- Review and communicate plans for contracting substitute workers to supplement the regular workforce.

## **Step 3: Prepare for an Impacted or Reduced Workforce**

### **A. Recruit and train new contingency workers:**

- Reach out to current workers, who know the work environment and type of skills necessary, to recruit contingency workers.
- Seek out job boards with high schools, colleges, universities, and industry groups to reach those who may be seeking employment.
- Use social media and other networking tools to identify available workers.

### **B. Prepare to function with a reduced workforce**

- Anticipate the possibility that you are unable to recruit and train replacement workers.
- Prioritize the most essential tasks and critical workers that are needed to maintain the production schedule.
- Identify tasks that could be considered for a reduced schedule.
- Prepare guidance for a situation where an owner, manager, or key leader becomes ill or needs to self-quarantine.
- Prepare other workers to assume temporary management responsibilities.
- Identify tools for remote communication.

### **Additional resources**

- [Agriculture labor housing guidance](#) (Oregon OSHA)
- [Manufacturing Workers and Employers](#) (CDC)
- [Meat and Poultry Processing Workers and Employers](#) (CDC)
- [Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers Responding to Coronavirus Disease](#) (CDC)
- [National Milk Producers Federation Coronavirus Resources](#) (NMPF.org)
- [US Food and Drug Administration Coronavirus Disease 2019](#) (FDA)
- [Oregon Health Authority COVID-19 Updates](#) (OHA)
- [COVID-19 and Oregon OSHA](#) (Or-OSHA)
- [Oregon Department of Agriculture COVID-19 Information](#) (ODA)
- [Oregon whistleblower or retaliation protections](#) regarding workplace and health. (BOLI)
- [Whistleblower or retaliation protections regarding workplace safety and health](#). (Federal OSHA)

## Contact information

- [Local Public Health Authority \(LPHA\)](#) – CD [Communicable Disease] Nurse or After-Hours CD columns. It is strongly encouraged that any plan include communication with your LPHA. There may be collaborative opportunities available.
  - LPHA may have capability to provide testing resources related to symptomatic individuals or outbreaks in the workplace
  - Contact tracing resources to support identified COVID positive exposure
  - Access to resources related to isolation in the community
- [Oregon OSHA Consultative Services](#) – education and outreach in regards to workplace safety and health regulations, including those from Executive Orders.
- [Oregon Department of Agriculture](#) – find a food safety specialist and receive education and outreach regarding maintaining a safe and stable food supply.