



Introduction

This tip sheet is for employers and workers in the Agricultural sector. It provides an overview of potential workplace risks and hazards due to COVID-19 and recommends control measures to help reduce the risk of exposure.

In all cases, guidance from [local public health authorities](#) and your jurisdictional [Occupational Health and Safety \(OHS\) regulator](#) must be followed. Also refer to current COVID-19 guidance from:

- [Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety \(CCOHS\)](#)
- [The Public Health Agency of Canada \(PHAC\)](#)
- [Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada \(AAFC\)](#)
- [The Canadian Food Inspection Agency \(CFIA\)](#)

The following resources are useful for temporary foreign workers (TFWs):

- [COVID-19: Guidance for Temporary Foreign Workers](#)
- [Prevent the Spread of COVID-19: Guidance for Temporary Foreign Workers](#)
- [COVID-19: A guide for temporary foreign workers travelling to Canada](#)
- [Foreign Worker Rights](#)

Consider the Risks

The risk of [COVID-19 transmission](#) is increased when:

- Person-to-person interactions are longer and more frequent, especially when less than 2 metres apart.
- Attending crowded or poorly ventilated places.
- Taking part in activities that generate respiratory droplets and aerosols (e.g., when speaking, coughing, heavy exertion, etc.).
- People have inadequate hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, or access to cleaning facilities and products.
- Frequently handling contaminated surfaces and objects.
- There are many local community COVID-19 cases.
- COVID-19 variants which are more transmissible emerge.

Workers may be exposed to a combination of these risks. Risk of transmission increases further when several of these risk factors occur at the same time.

Each workplace is unique. Consider all possible COVID-19 exposure scenarios in your setting and perform a COVID-19 risk assessment. Develop or use an existing risk assessment checklist to document and evaluate all work setting characteristics, locations, activities, and job roles.

Sample questions to ask during a COVID-19 risk assessment:

- What are the main work zones, processes, and job roles?
- What activities and situations are most likely to expose workers to the virus (e.g., heavy breathing, verbal communication, sharing tools and equipment)?
- Who are the people that interact with others in the workplace (co-workers, producers, delivery people, inspectors, contractors, visitors, members of the public)?
- How frequent and physically close are interactions between people?
- Is there interaction between workers from different shifts, field locations, or cohorts?
- Where and when do people gather (e.g., dining areas, break areas, indoor spaces to complete group tasks)?
- Is the ventilation in enclosed spaces (buildings, vehicles, etc.) adequate?
- Are workers able to maintain physical distancing?



- Are any workers living in congregate housing and using group transportation?
- Do workers have easy access to hand hygiene facilities, including at outdoor worksites?
- What machinery, equipment, and tools are shared in the workplace?
- What are the high-touch surfaces or objects (e.g., washrooms, equipment, etc.)?
- Could language barriers impact the ability of workers to understand and implement the transmission control measures?
- Are local COVID-19 cases or hospitalizations high or rising?
- What percentage of the local community and workforce are fully vaccinated?
- Are corporate sick leave policies adequate to support isolation and quarantine?
- Which workers are at higher risk of severe outcomes from COVID-19 infection (i.e., [older, pregnant or otherwise vulnerable](#))?

Note: Some livestock animals such as cows, pigs, and mink could be affected by COVID-19. The risk of animals spreading COVID-19 to humans is currently believed to be low but caution is advised. Workers who handle, feed, slaughter, or otherwise interact with livestock should be made aware of this concern and use precautions against the spread of COVID-19 even if working with livestock that appear to be healthy. Consult with your applicable business association or livestock veterinarian for details.

Control Measures

Meet your legal occupational health and safety obligations by doing everything reasonably possible in the circumstances to protect the health and safety of your workers.

To provide the highest level of protection to workers, use multiple [public health measures](#) and [workplace controls](#) in a [layered approach](#). No single measure is completely effective alone.

Be careful not to create new workplace hazards or negatively impact existing health and safety, food quality, or environmental controls. Review and adjust measures as necessary in consultation with the workplace health and safety committee or representative.

Create and implement a written workplace [COVID-19 safety plan](#) supported by the risk assessment. The plan should document the control measures meant to protect workers from exposure to COVID-19. A written plan may be legally required by the jurisdiction in which you operate. Refer to local authorities for details on what must be included in the plan, if it needs to be posted etc.

Implement policies and programs to [accommodate](#) workers who are at [high risk](#) of severe disease or outcomes from a COVID-19 infection (i.e., immunocompromised, have chronic medical conditions, unable to be vaccinated, or older).

Vaccination

- Consider creating and implementing a COVID-19 [vaccination policy](#) that follows applicable government requirements. Make sure the company policy does not conflict with any laws.
- Proof of vaccination (i.e., vaccine passport, medical records, or a signed affidavit) may be required for Temporary Foreign Workers to enter the country or work in the agricultural sector.
- The employer, health and safety committee or representative, and union (if applicable) should discuss any concerns surrounding mandatory COVID-19 vaccination requirements, including any valid exemptions and need for accommodation.
- Encourage eligible workers to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Acknowledge that some individuals may not be eligible to receive the vaccine (proof of exemption may be required).
- All workplace COVID-19 control measures and public health measures must still be followed even if all workers are fully vaccinated.
- Refer to the government of Canada website "[Vaccines for COVID-19](#)", "[The facts about COVID-19 vaccines](#)", and the CCOHS "[COVID-19 Vaccines](#)" for reliable information about vaccination.

Communication and Training



For general recommendations, refer to CCOHS [COVID-19 Communication and Training](#). Specific training requirements and recommendations may vary depending on your jurisdiction.

Communicate the workplace controls and the public health measures that are in place to all workers in languages they understand. Communications should be frequent enough to update workers on changes and to allow for feedback and concerns to be raised. Use [posters or infographics](#) where they can be easily noticed.

COVID-19 specific training for workers should include the following:

- Recognizing common [COVID-19 symptoms](#) and how to respond when symptoms are identified.
- What to do if exposed and how to [get tested for COVID-19](#).
- How and when to report COVID-19 illness.
- Information on vaccines and options for [vaccination](#).
- How to [prevent the spread of COVID-19](#) and [protect themselves](#) at work.
- Ways to stay informed using [reputable sources](#).
- Policies, plans, and procedures (such as mask policy, vaccination policy, cleaning and disinfection schedule, COVID-19 safety plan).
- Make sure workers understand how to safely use cleaning and disinfection products.

Alert workers whenever changes are made, and re-train them as necessary.

Post signs and infographics where they can be seen by workers, such as:

- [Take the Time to Wash Your Hands](#): Washrooms.
- [Prevent the Spread of Infections](#): Entrances, high-touch surfaces.
- [COVID-19 mask use: How to choose, use and care for a mask](#): Entrances.
- [About coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)](#): Entrances.
- Screening poster (obtained from your [local public health authority](#)): Entrances.
- Signs indicating the maximum occupancy for rooms or spaces, especially those which should have few occupants such as washrooms.
- Floor markers or posters which encourage physical distancing.
- Clean - Dirty tags for equipment or rooms that must be cleaned between uses.

Screening and Contact Tracing

- Before allowing entry to the worksite or the start of work, request proof or attestation of vaccination as required by your local legislation or your COVID-19 safety plan.
- Implement a [screening](#) policy which outlines the type of screening each worksite requires: passive or active. Some jurisdictions may require active screening in response to local pandemic conditions.
 - Passive screening requires individuals to self-monitor and self-report possible illness or exposure to COVID-19. Signs at entrances should include what symptoms to monitor for and how to self-report. Passive screening information can also be communicated in advance electronically before people come to the space.
 - Active screening requires individuals to respond to questions about possible signs or symptoms of infection, recent possible COVID-19 exposures, or recent travel outside of Canada. Paper or web-based screening [questionnaires](#), or a designated person asking screening questions may be part of the active screening process. Administer active screening before the start of a shift, entering the worksite, or being allowed onto group transportation.
- [Rapid testing](#) may be performed in addition to the screening questionnaire. This testing may be useful in identifying asymptomatic people.
- Workers that pass the screening can enter the worksite or start their shift.
- Anyone who does not pass the screening should be denied entry. Follow your COVID-19 Response Plan for confirmed or suspected case.



- If required by your local public health authority, collect the information of all persons entering the workplace, including their names, contact information, and time spent on the site. This information should be provided to the local public health authority if requested for the purpose of [contact tracing](#). All information must be safely stored and destroyed as required by privacy legislation.
- Encourage workers to install the [COVID Alert App](#) on their phones. This app is designed to let people in Canada know whether they may have been exposed to COVID-19.

COVID-19 Response Plan

- When any person experiences COVID-19 symptoms while already in the workplace:
 - Immediately have them wear a suitable mask (such as an N95 respirator or medical (surgical) mask). If not available, they should properly wear a well-constructed and well-fitting non-medical mask. A respirator used as source control (i.e., to prevent spread of viruses from a person who may be ill) may not need fit testing.
 - If an individual who is experiencing symptoms is medically unfit to wear a mask or respirator, either ask them to leave as soon as it is safe for them to do so. If needed, have them isolate in a designated area, away from other workers, until they can leave, **or** if they are living on-site, have them isolate for a duration indicated by the local public health or government authority. Avoid keeping an infected worker in shared spaces of group housing. Provide food, medication, and other essentials for the duration of the isolation period.
- Call **911** for medical assistance if symptoms are life threatening. Notify their emergency contact.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects which may have been contaminated by the worker and ventilate spaces as necessary.
- If the case is work-related involving a worker, additional notifications may be required. Contact your jurisdictional [OHS regulator](#) and [workers' compensation board](#) for guidance. Complete an incident report and begin an investigation.
- Refer to guidance from your local public health authority to determine when the worker can return to work.
- Make sure that your sick leave policy supports workers who are or may be sick. Support may include paid or unpaid sick leave, long-term disability, and government programs.
- For additional information on what to do if someone is identified as having symptoms or has potentially been exposed to COVID-19, please refer to:
 - [Responding to COVID-19 in the Workplace](#) – CCOHS.

Ventilation

- [Ventilate](#) indoor spaces appropriately, according to their size and occupancy level.
- Make sure that any pre-existing food-safety air quality standards are not compromised.
- Maintain ventilation systems and seek advice from a Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning ([HVAC](#)) professional on possible improvements (e.g., increasing air exchanges per hour, reducing or eliminating recirculated air, or upgrades to air filtration and disinfection). Open windows and doors where possible and if the weather permits. Consider potential impacts to temperature, air pressure, food quality, animal health, etc.
- Make sure that air circulation or cooling fans do not direct air flow from person to person.
- If ventilation cannot be improved, consider using portable air filtration units with high-efficiency particulate (HEPA) filters.
- Keep humidity between 30% and 50% for indoor settings.
- For group transportation (e.g., shuttles to and from the job site), increase the amount of fresh air entering the vehicle by opening the windows (weather permitting) and setting the ventilation to outside air intake. Do not use the recirculated air option.
- For additional information on indoor ventilation, please refer to:



- [COVID-19: Guidance on indoor ventilation during the pandemic](#) – Government of Canada
- [COVID-19: Improving indoor ventilation](#) – Government of Canada
- [Indoor Ventilation: Guidance During The COVID-19 Pandemic](#) – CCOHS

Physical Barriers

- Consider installing physical barriers, such as clear acrylic plastic and other non-porous materials that are easy to clean and disinfect, where possible and appropriate.
- Barriers are most effective when placed between people who may expel respiratory particles in the direction of each other (e.g., during verbal communication, heavy breathing during physically intensive tasks, on sorting and packing lines, etc.), especially when the interactions are physically close and frequent.
- Assess how appropriate barriers are in your setting and where they may be most effectively positioned.
- Make sure not to block aisles or exits.
- Ensure that barriers do not negatively impact ventilation.
- Barriers are not a substitute for other public health measures such as the use of masks and physical distancing.
- For additional information on physical distancing, refer to:
 - [Physical Barriers](#) – CCOHS

Physical Distancing

Physical distancing requires people to:

- Maximize distance from others (at least 2 metres in all directions).
- Avoid non-essential in-person interactions.
- Keep interactions as few and as brief as possible.

Consider the following tips for additional safety:

- Modify tasks to minimize close physical contact, including harvesting, sorting, processing, packaging, material pick-up and delivery, and maintenance activities.
- Enforce distancing of workers at both side-by-side and facing-across workstations, especially where barriers are absent.
- Reduce the frequency and duration of in-person interactions.
- Discourage unnecessary physical contact such as hugs, handshakes, and high fives.
- Discourage congregating and crowding during breaks and shift-changes.
- Avoid large in-person gatherings such as social events.
- Meetings may be conducted remotely with video conferencing software.
- Follow the occupancy limits and physical distancing requirements set by your local public health authority, and applicable fire code. Set limits for each space (e.g., washrooms, lunch area, etc.). Signs can be used to clearly indicate occupancy limits.
- For meals, consider:
 - Staggering mealtimes or increasing hours of availability when practical.
 - Removing and rearranging dining tables to maximize physical distancing.
 - Using other rooms to serve as dining spaces.
 - Discontinuing buffet service (e.g., salad bars) and switching to prepackaged meals or meals served by staff.
 - Removing shared food/condiment/utensil stations and beverage dispensers.
 - Providing take-out meals so they can be consumed elsewhere.



- Discouraging the sharing of food or unwashed plates, cups, or utensils.
- Placing floor markings, signs, and other visual cues to indicate minimum required physical distancing.
- Making sure that kitchen staff are following safe-food handling practices.
- For sleeping areas, consider:
 - Providing single occupancy sleeping quarters.
 - For shared sleeping quarters (e.g., bunkrooms), where possible, arrange beds so that they are at least 2 metres apart and the sleeping positions are head to toe. Avoid bunk beds.
 - Discourage visitors and off-site workers from entering the accommodation area.
- Consider placing workers into **cohorts** (dedicated teams or crews):
 - Cohort members should remain physically distanced from other cohorts.
 - Schedule the cohort to work, travel, and take breaks together.
 - If living on-site, members of a cohort should stay in the same building (i.e., do not mix different cohorts in congregate housing).
 - If living off-site, consider assigning workers who live in the same immediate household (e.g., relatives, friends, or roommates) to one work cohort or shift.
 - Keep cohorts separate during group transportation.
 - Support each cohort with trained supervisors and first aid or emergency response personnel.
- Maximize physical distancing during group transportation (e.g., on shuttle buses). This method may require multiple vehicles, larger vehicles, staggered seating, or more trips with fewer workers. Do not allow crowding when getting in and out of group transportation.
- Discourage use of carpooling unless with members of the same cohort.
- Follow all public health measures if using public transportation.
- Allow exceptions to distancing guidance in certain circumstances such as rescuing a distressed person, providing first aid, or performing Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR).
- Workers cannot be prohibited from leaving the farm or worksite to visit the community but the need to do so frequently can be minimized:
 - Set up direct deposit, internet, and phone access so workers can more easily manage their funds, buy personal supplies, and communicate with family directly from their accommodations.
 - Arrange with local shops for supplies to be delivered regularly.
- For additional information on physical distancing, refer to:
 - [COVID-19 and Physical Distancing](#) - CCOHS

Hygiene Measures

- Encourage good [hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette](#).
- Provide adequate handwashing stations or hand [sanitizer](#) dispensers (always with minimum 60% alcohol content) in prominent worksite locations such as entrances, exits, breakrooms, inside vehicles, workstations, outdoor fields, inside buildings, washrooms, etc.
- Encourage hand washing or sanitizing before:
 - The start of a shift.
 - Eating or drinking.
 - Putting on masks.
 - Leaving the work area.
- And after:
 - Touching shared items.
 - Using the washroom.



- Removing masks.
- Cleaning and disinfecting.
- Discourage individuals from touching their eyes, nose, mouth, or masks if their hands have not been washed or sanitized.
- Periodically check and restock soap, sanitizer, paper towels, and any other products provided for good hygiene.
- Reduce the number of shared objects. Avoid sharing tools and equipment if possible.
- Clean and disinfect shared tools and equipment between users.
- Whenever possible, reduce the number of high-touch points by having:
 - Motion activated doors, faucets, toilets, urinals, and lighting.
 - Hand motion or foot pedal activated dispensers (for soap, paper towels, sanitizer, etc.) and plastic lined waste containers.
 - No touch methods of tracking worker attendance such as key cards or electronic messaging.
- Have everyone store their personal items (such as jackets) in separate lockers, in labelled and sealed bins or bags, or in spaces which do not allow physical contact between each person's belongings.
- Do not permit the sharing of personal protective equipment, masks, or uniforms.
- If possible, avoiding sharing tools and equipment between cohorts or clean and disinfect before sharing.

Cleaning and Disinfection

Viruses can remain on objects for a few hours to days depending on the type of surface and environmental conditions. Develop a cleaning and disinfecting schedule and standard operating procedure for touch points. The schedule should identify when cleaning and disinfecting needs to be done, and checklists can be used to record when it has taken place. High-touch surfaces, objects, tools, and equipment should be disinfected multiple times a day.

Use an [approved hard surface disinfectant](#) that is both effective against COVID-19 and food-safe. Follow the manufacturer's instructions and Safety Data Sheet (SDS). Focus on:

- Areas in which workers spend most of their time (e.g., workstations, dining and break rooms, vehicles, sleeping quarters, etc.).
- High-touch surfaces such as:
 - Kitchens: countertops, sinks, faucets, stoves, light switches, cabinets, refrigerators, and freezers.
 - Dining areas: chairs, tables.
 - Washrooms and showers: door handles, counters, faucets, soap dispensers, door locks, toilet flushing mechanisms.
 - Vehicles: door handles, seats and arm rests, seatbelts, steering wheel, consoles, dashboard, keys.
 - Tools and equipment involved in agricultural operations: farm equipment and vehicles, machinery controls, sorting and packing tables, conveyor belts, carts, bins, etc.
- Physical barriers.

After cleaning and disinfecting, consider:

- Used cleaning cloths, towels etc. must be properly handled to prevent cross-contamination and laundered or disposed of after every use.
- Deposit heavily contaminated or disposable items into plastic lined waste containers.
- Dispose of garbage at least daily.
- Follow up these tasks with hand hygiene.

For additional information on cleaning and disinfection, refer to:

- [Cleaning and Disinfecting for COVID-19](#) - CCOHS
- [Standard Operating Procedure: Disinfection of Touch Points](#) - CCOHS



Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Refer to the Government of Canada's [Personal protective equipment \(COVID-19\): Overview](#) and CCOHS' [Designing an Effective PPE Program](#) for more information about PPE.

- PPE includes such items as respirators, eye protection (e.g., goggles, face shield), gowns, coveralls, aprons, gloves, and safety footwear.
- Continue to use PPE for existing occupational safety hazards and emergencies. COVID-19 PPE policies must not interfere when a higher level of protection is needed for the task.
- Noisy environments can cause workers to shout to communicate. When it isn't possible to reduce the noise levels, consider hearing protection which reduces high frequencies but allows the wearer to hear speech.
- Employers should conduct a hazard assessment and make sure that workers have the correct PPE for the tasks and activities they are performing.
- Workers may need PPE for COVID-19 protection if they are:
 - Performing tasks that require them to be less than 2 metres from another person.
 - Using cleaning and disinfecting products (refer to the manufacturers' safe handling instructions).
 - Providing emergency first-aid.
- Workers must be trained on how to properly use and care for their PPE.
- Respirator masks used as PPE must be properly fit tested for each worker, to meet health and safety regulations.

Mask Wearing

Refer to the CCOHS [Get the Facts on Masks](#) tip sheet for information on how to properly choose, wear, and care for masks.

- Follow the mask wearing requirements of your local public health authority and jurisdiction. If not required, mask wearing should still be encouraged as an additional measure when there is high risk for COVID-19 spread, or when physical distancing is not possible.
- Masks should be worn indoors and when there is more than one occupant in a vehicle.
- Masks should be well-constructed and well-fitting, covering the nose, mouth, and chin.
- Encourage people not to touch their face or mask with unwashed hands.
- For some individuals, not being able to see a workers' face and mouth clearly may cause difficulties (e.g., hard of hearing, using lip-reading, needing to see facial expressions). Consider using [transparent masks](#).
- Workers may also wish to use eye protection (such as safety glasses, goggles, or face shield) in addition to a mask when in close physical contact with others. Note that face shields do not offer equivalent respiratory protection as masks.
- Implement or update the workplace [heat-stress program](#), as mask wearing may increase physiological stress during high-exertion tasks.
- Masks should not be worn by anyone who is unable to remove the mask without assistance (e.g., due to their age, ability, or developmental status).
- Be aware that all types of masks have limitations, and improper mask use and disposal can increase the risk of infection. While masks used as source control are useful in reducing the spread of COVID-19, they are not considered Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) as they do not meet regulated testing and certification standards.

If you or someone you know is in crisis, please contact your local hospital, call 911 immediately, or contact a [Crisis Centre in your area](#).





It is important that mental health resources and support are provided to all workers, including access to an employee assistance program, if available.

For further information on COVID-19, refer to the [Public Health Agency of Canada](#).

Note that this guidance is just some of the adjustments organizations can make during a pandemic. Adapt this list by adding your own good practices and policies to meet your organization's specific needs.

Disclaimer: As public and occupational health and safety information is changing rapidly, local public health authorities should be consulted for specific, regional guidance. This information is not intended to replace medical advice or legislated health and safety obligations. Although every effort is made to ensure the accuracy, currency and completeness of the information, CCOHS does not guarantee, warrant, represent or undertake that the information provided is correct, accurate or current. CCOHS is not liable for any loss, claim, or demand arising directly or indirectly from any use or reliance upon the information.