

COVID-19 Public Health Guidelines: Employers of Farm Workers

Last updated November 25, 2020

This document provides guidance for employers of farm workers to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 on farms. It does not replace guidance from the Province, including Ontario's [COVID-19 Response Framework: Keeping Ontario Safe and Open](#).

To support safe reopening, employers must also abide by:

- Government of Ontario's [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#), agriculture sector [resources](#) and the online toolkit [Working With Farm Operators to Stop the Spread of COVID-19 on Farms](#).
- Relevant legislation, including [Consolidated By-law 47-20](#) that requires the wearing of non-medical masks in enclosed public places.
- Additional legislation applicable to the employment of farm workers.

COVID-19 transmission

COVID-19 is spread mainly from person-to-person through the respiratory droplets of someone infected with COVID-19. The respiratory droplets can travel up to two metres (six feet) through coughing, sneezing or talking. COVID-19 can also be transmitted when a person touches a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touches their mouth, nose or eyes.

Self-isolation for foreign workers upon arrival in Canada

- Ensure all foreign workers who have arrived in Canada are isolated for 14 days starting from the date of arrival.
 - Keep a list of names of all workers scheduled to arrive in Canada and their planned date of arrival.
 - Workers in isolation must stay in a separate room or alternative accommodation (separate from others who are not in self-isolation) with all necessary amenities (for example, separate washroom, shower) that allows for a minimum 2 metres of physical distancing, and in consultation with Halton Region Public Health.
 - If new workers arrive and share accommodations with others already in isolation, the 14-day period for all workers starts on the day the most recent worker(s) arrived.
 - Workers must not work on any farm during the 14-day isolation period.
- Arrange for provision of adequate food, potable water, toiletries, laundry and cleaning supplies for workers in isolation.
- Notify Halton Region Public Health if a worker(s) needs to leave the farm for ANY reason during the isolation period (for example, to seek medical attention).
- Monitor the health of workers in isolation.
- Ensure that all employees understand their rights and entitlements, including access to healthcare services and other supports that may be available if a worker becomes sick.

Self-isolation when a worker becomes ill

- Ensure a plan is in place to secure isolation spaces if any worker develops [COVID-19 symptoms](#).
 - Workers who become symptomatic at any time should be tested and must [self-isolate](#) from others and not be allowed to work during the self-isolation period
 - Notify Halton Region Public Health immediately if a worker living on the farm develops COVID-19 symptoms.

- Workers who develop COVID-19 symptoms and their close contacts living on the farm:
 - must be accommodated in a private bedroom with a dedicated bathroom;
 - must be provided with adequate food, potable water, toiletries, laundry and cleaning supplies; and
 - must have ongoing access to a cell phone or landline—these are required if they are under public health supervision for case and contact management.
- Monitor the health of workers who are in self-isolation and notify Halton Region Public Health if a worker(s) needs to leave the farm for ANY reason during the isolation period (for example, to seek medical attention).
- If COVID-19 is suspected or diagnosed in a worker, return to work should be determined in consultation with their employer, health care provider and Halton Region Public Health.

Limiting workers and contracted employees to one workplace

- Limit all current or future workers and contracted employees to working in one workplace.
- Keep accurate and updated contact information for all employees (permanent, temporary or contract), which may need to be provided to Halton Region Public Health within 24 hours of request, for case management and contact tracing.

Screening of workers for COVID-19 symptoms

Employers should implement active screening in addition to passive screening measures.

- Active screening:
 - Every day, ask workers if they have [COVID-19 symptoms](#).
 - Ensure the screener maintains a distance of at least 2 metres from those being screened or is separated by a barrier (for example, Plexiglas), or wears PPE (surgical/procedure mask, gown, gloves, eye protection), and alcohol-based (60-90% alcohol) hand sanitizer is provided.
 - Instruct workers to [self-monitor](#) for symptoms such as fever, cough or difficulty breathing.
- Passive screening
 - Post signage (examples: [Halton Region Entrance Screening sign](#), [Government of Ontario Visitor sign](#)) that is clear and visible and in the language that workers are able to understand at the entrance of the work site to help workers identify if they have COVID-19 symptoms.
 - Workers can also be requested to complete the [Self-Assessment Tool](#) before arrival/entry.
 - Communicate to workers that they may not enter the workplace if they suspect they have [COVID-19 symptoms](#) or may have been exposed to COVID-19, and to [self-isolate](#) immediately.

Education and signage

- Educate workers on [public health measures](#) to prevent the spread of COVID-19, considering reading level and language preference, and COVID-19 signage is clearly posted at appropriate locations at the farm:
 - do not work if [COVID-19 symptoms](#) develop, immediately self-isolate and notify employer
 - maintain [physical distance](#) of 2 metres (6 feet) from others
 - practice proper [hand hygiene](#)
 - sneeze and cough into your sleeve or a tissue
 - avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth frequently
 - encourage workers not to share personal items (e.g. towels, soap, water bottles)
- Find additional resources, including COVID-19 posters and tip sheets in English and Spanish, on the Government of Ontario [website](#).

Hand hygiene

- Have all workers practice hand hygiene before entering the workplace and after contact with high-touch surfaces.

- Ensure hand wash sinks are supplied with hot and cold running water, liquid soap in a dispenser and paper towels or hot air dryer. Paper towels are preferred where hands-free taps are not available, in order to prevent recontamination of hands when turning off taps.
- Provide alcohol-based (60%-90% alcohol) hand sanitizer for use by workers in areas where soap and running water are not available.

Physical distancing

- Ensure measures are in place to support physical distancing of 2 metres (6 feet) between individuals in the living accommodations, work and rest areas, considering:
 - spacing or removal of furniture in common areas (for example, break areas, living rooms);
 - use of signs, closing of stalls in washroom, where appropriate;
 - limit the number of people working in a space at the same time;
 - stagger start times, shifts, breaks and lunch times; and
 - install barriers (for example, Plexiglas) between workers, where practical.
- Assign workers to the same team/group/work pod (cohort) that is separated from other individuals and teams, (for example, workers who share a living space, work area, the same shifts, breaks, etc.).
 - Within the cohort, workers should maintain a 2-metre physical distance from other workers.
- Transport workers in individual vehicles or within cohorts; maximize physical distancing, everyone in the vehicle should wear a non-medical mask or face covering, keep windows open (depending on weather).

Cleaning and disinfection

- In addition to routine cleaning and disinfection, ensure a procedure is in place to [clean and disinfect](#) high touch surfaces in living accommodations and work areas (for example, handles, doorknobs, light switches, toilet handles, counters, hand rails, touch screen surfaces, food contact surfaces) at least twice a day and when visibly dirty.
 - Use products that are [approved by Health Canada](#), with a Drug Identification Number (DIN) and follow the manufacturer's instructions for use.
 - A record can be maintained to monitor cleaning frequency.
- Provide cleaning supplies, including paper towels, household cleaning and disinfection products, dish soap and laundry soap and personal protective equipment, as appropriate.
- Limit sharing of farm equipment, where possible; limit number of workers using equipment, assign each worker to their own piece of equipment, or disinfect shared equipment between uses.

Non-medical masks and personal protective equipment (PPE)

- Provide [non-medical masks](#) to be worn by workers when physical distancing is difficult to maintain. Masks should not be worn by anyone who has trouble breathing.
- Provide workers with PPE that is appropriate for the work being performed (for example, cleaning and disinfection, screening).
- Train workers on the use of non-medical/cloth masks, [putting on and taking off PPE](#) as well as proper disposal.

Additional resources

- Halton Region Public Health:
 - [COVID-19 \(2019 Novel Coronavirus\)](#)
 - Halton Region [Class Order](#) issued under Section 22 of the Health Protection and Promotion Act, R.S.O. 1990, c.H.7, as amended
- Government of Ontario

- [Guidance for Temporary Foreign Workers](#)
- [COVID-19 Guidance: On-Farm Outbreak Management](#)
- Sector-specific [resources](#) (English and Spanish) to prevent COVID-19 in the workplace, including [Guidance on Health and Safety for Agricultural Employers Using Temporary Help During COVID-19](#)
- [Working With Farm Operators to Stop the Spread of COVID-19 on Farms](#)
- [Workplace PPE Supplier Directory](#)
- [Guidance for employers of temporary foreign workers regarding COVID-19](#)
- [COVID-19 Response Framework: Keeping Ontario Safe and Open](#)
- [Ontario Regulation 364/20](#): Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020 (Rules for Areas in Stage 3).
- [Ontario Regulation 263/20](#): Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020 (Rules for Areas in Stage 2).
- [Ontario Regulation 82/20](#): Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020 (Rules for areas in Stage 1).

More information

For more information and updates, visit halton.ca/COVID19 or call 311.