

COVID-19 Public Health Guidance: Employers of Temporary Foreign Farm Workers

Last updated September 17, 2021

This document outlines guidance for employers of temporary foreign workers (TFW) to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 on farms. It does not replace guidance from the Province. This document is for information purposes only, and shall not be construed as legal advice.

Provincial Roadmap to Reopen at a glance

On July 16, Ontario moved into Step 3 of the [Roadmap to Reopen](#). Residents, organizations, and businesses must abide by the public health measures for Step 3. See [O. Reg. 364/20, Schedules 1, 2 and 3](#), for regulations for Step 3. The Chief Medical Officer of Health and other health experts will continue to monitor the data to determine when it is safe to exit the Roadmap.

Employers must ensure measures are in place to keep their labour force and the broader community safe from COVID-19, while ensuring compliance with the requirements outlined in the [Occupational Health and Safety Act \(OHSA\)](#). Employers should also consult the Government of Ontario's agriculture sector [resources](#) and the online toolkit [Working with Farm Operators to Stop the Spread of COVID-19 on Farms](#).

Ontario's enhanced COVID-19 vaccine certificate

Starting September 22, 2021, the provincial government will require certain businesses and settings to obtain proof of vaccination from customers/patrons. For more information refer to the [Proof of Vaccination Guidance for Businesses and Organizations](#).

Instructions for workplaces from Halton Region's Medical Officer of Health

Halton Region's Medical Officer of Health (MOH) issued [amended Instructions to businesses and organizations](#) to help keep staff and customers/patrons safe. The instructions take effect at 12:01 a.m. on **Friday, September 10, 2021**. They combine key existing requirements from the Province and Halton Region Public Health, with some new requirements. **Compliance with these instructions is mandatory.**

Workplace vaccination

Workplace vaccination policy

To reduce COVID-19 transmission in the workplace, Halton Region's MOH recommends all local employers have a [workplace COVID-19 vaccination policy](#). For workplaces with more than 100 workers physically present, Halton Region Public Health requires mandatory [COVID-19 safety plans](#) and vaccination policies in place by September 22, 2021.

Encourage everyone to get a COVID-19 vaccine

Getting vaccinated is one of the ways to stop the spread of COVID-19. Here are some ways you can support vaccination at your workplace:

- Develop a [workplace COVID-19 vaccination policy](#)
- Ensure employees are aware that everyone in Canada is eligible to receive a vaccine for free. Proof of identity is required but a health card is not required for vaccination.
- Share [COVID-19 vaccine resources](#), with staff, available in multiple languages

Self-isolation for temporary foreign workers upon arrival in Canada

Ensure all temporary foreign workers (TFWs) upon arrival to Canada quarantine (self-isolate) for 14 days, unless exempt.

- TFWs who are fully vaccinated with Government of Canada-approved vaccines, administered at least 14 days prior to entering Canada, and who meet the requirements prior to departure, are exempt.
- For up-to-date information for TFWs arriving to Canada, visit the Government of Canada's [Quarantine and mandatory testing information for temporary foreign workers](#).
- Maintain a list of names of all workers scheduled to arrive in Canada and their planned date of arrival.
- Provide a separate room or alternative accommodation with all necessary amenities (for example, separate washroom, shower) that allow for at least two metres (six feet) of physical distance, and in consultation with Halton Region Public Health.
 - Ensure new workers are not placed in a congregate setting that has active COVID-19 cases.
 - New workers arriving to Canada must not be accommodated with other workers already in isolation.
 - Limit the number of workers in shared accommodations, whenever possible.
- Do not allow workers to work 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 employees understand their rights and entitlements, including access to healthcare services that may be available if a worker becomes sick. Post [Calling for Help in an Emergency](#) adjacent to a telephone. (Notice is available in several languages).

Self-isolation when a worker becomes ill

- Workers who become symptomatic at any time must [self-isolate](#), be tested for COVID-19 and not be allowed to work during the isolation period.
- Employers must ensure the worker can access appropriate medical care, and arrange for transportation of the worker to and from the assessment centre (not public transportation).
- Immediately provide accommodations that enable the worker and their close contacts to isolate from others that must include:
 - A private bedroom and bathroom.
 - Adequate food, potable water, toiletries, laundry and cleaning supplies.
 - Access to a cell phone or landline on an ongoing basis, which is required 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).
- Follow the steps outlined in the [instructions for workplaces](#) issued by Halton Region's Medical Officer of Health if a worker tests positive for COVID-19.
- If COVID-19 is suspected or diagnosed in a worker, return to work should be determined in consultation with the employer, health care provider and Halton Region Public Health.

Limit 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) and third party employers. A list of cohorts should also be maintained.
- Provide contact information to Halton Region Public Health within 24 hours of being requested, for case and contact management.

Additional COVID-19 public health measures

The following COVID-19 Public Health Measures are recommended by Halton Region Public Health and should be considered for all steps of Ontario's [Roadmap to Reopen](#).

Provide education and signage

- Educate workers on [public health measures](#) to prevent the spread of COVID-19, considering reading level and language preference, and ensure 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 and frequent [hand hygiene](#)
 - sneeze and cough into your sleeve or a tissue
 - avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth
 - encourage workers not to share personal items (e.g. towels, soap, water bottles)
- Find additional resources, including COVID-19 posters and tip sheets available in several languages, on the [Government of Ontario Agriculture health and safety during COVID-19](#) website.

Maximize physical distancing and reduce physical contact

- Ensure measures are in place to support physical distancing of two metres (six feet) between individuals in the living accommodations, work, rest and outdoor areas, considering:
 - providing additional accommodations with private rooms or rooms with the fewest number of occupants;
 - placing beds head to foot or foot to foot in shared bedrooms and minimizing the use of bunk beds;
 - ensuring appropriate spacing in common areas (for example, break areas, living rooms);
 - using signs to encourage [physical distancing](#);
 - closing alternating stalls in washrooms, where appropriate;
 - limiting the number of people working in any given space at the same time;
 - staggering start times, shifts, breaks and lunch times;
 - installing barriers (for example, Plexiglas) between workers, where practical and;
 - maximizing fresh air exchange, where possible.
- Assign workers to a consistent group (cohort) that is separated from other individuals and teams, (for example, workers who share a living space, work area, the same shifts, breaks, etc.). The size of each cohort should be kept as small as possible.
 - Within each cohort, workers should maintain a two metre (six feet) physical distance.
 - Minimize mixing between cohorts, including any social activities.
 - Temporary agency workers should be kept in a separate cohort from other workers.
- Transport workers either individually or within cohorts, ensuring:
 - physical distancing is maximized;
 - everyone is wearing a mask and practising respiratory etiquette;
 - windows are open when possible to improve fresh air intake, and
 - high-touch surfaces (e.g., door handles) are disinfected frequently using a disinfectant wipe.
 - a seating chart should be maintained for contact tracing purposes.
- For additional resources, review the [Congregate Living Setting Resources Toolkit](#).

Wear a mask and use personal protective equipment (PPE)

- [Consolidated By-law 47-20](#) requires individuals to wear a mask in indoor workplaces and public spaces, unless exempt.
- Workers are recommended to wear a mask when they cannot maintain physical distance of 2 metres (six feet) and cannot be separated by Plexiglass or a barrier.
- PPE (surgical/procedure mask and eye protection i.e. goggles or face shield) is required to be worn by workers when a distance of 2 metres (six feet) cannot be maintained from another person not wearing a mask indoors and cannot be separated by Plexiglass or a barrier.

- Assess the appropriateness of masks for situations, consider the potential for health and safety issues created by masks (e.g. getting caught in machinery), work accommodations (e.g. health conditions and communication) and environmental conditions.
- Masks can be removed when eating or drinking, but individuals must maintain physical distancing of two metres (six feet) between them.
- Masks do not replace other important public health measures, such as screening, physical distancing, proper hand hygiene, coughing and sneezing into a tissue or sleeve and staying home when feeling ill.

Keep hands and surfaces clean

- Ensure all workers practice frequent [hand-hygiene](#) before entering the workplace and after contact with high-touch surfaces.
- Ensure hand wash sinks are available with hot and cold running water, liquid soap in a dispenser and paper towels. Use paper towels instead of hand dryers 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 rub when there is no access to soap and water and if hands are not visibly dirty.
- Conduct frequent [cleaning and disinfection](#) of all high touch surfaces and common areas.
- Keep a cleaning record to monitor cleaning frequency.
- 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.

Additional Resources

- Halton Region Public Health:
 - [Cleaning practices to prevent the spread of COVID-19](#)
 - [Mental Health Resources and Supports](#)
- Government of Ontario:
 - [Resources to prevent COVID-19 in the workplace](#) (English and Spanish)
- Ministry of Health:
 - [Guidance for Temporary Foreign Workers](#)
 - [COVID-19 Guidance: On-Farm Outbreak Management](#)
- Workplace Safety & Prevention Services:
 - [Guidance on Health and Safety for Agricultural Employers Using Temporary Help During COVID-19](#)
 - [Psychological Safety Resources for Leaders During COVID-19](#)
- Government of Canada:
 - [Guidance for Employers of Temporary Foreign Workers Regarding COVID-19](#)
 - [COVID:19 A Guide for Temporary Foreign Workers in Canada](#)