NCDOL
N.C. Department of Labor

Cherie Berry, Commissioner of Labor

1-800-625-2267 ◆ **www.labor.nc.gov**

HAZARD ALERT

Occupational Safety and Health Division
1101 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-1101

COVID-19 Health and Safety Guidelines for Food Processing Facilities

In order to minimize the risk from COVID-19 in the workplace, take the following steps:

Employers have asked for guidance on what to do to respond to the spread of COVID-19. Employers should start taking steps now and should be using all resources necessary to prepare for and respond to the outbreak.

Employee and Visitor Screening

- Conduct screening each time employees or visitors enter the facility. Use the following verbal screening for all persons:

  o Have you had any of the following symptoms since your last day at work or the last time you were here? Please answer "yes" or "no" to each question:

    - A new fever (100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher), or feeling feverish?
    - A new cough?
    - Shortness of breath?
    - A new sore throat?
    - New muscle aches?
    - Chills?
    - Repeated shaking with chills?
    - Headache?
    - New loss of taste or smell?

- Conduct temperature screening if it can be done with proper social distancing and hygiene.

- If a worker answers "yes" to any of the screening questions or has a temperature at or above 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit confirmed with thermometer, the worker should be further evaluated by a plant occupational health nurse, who can determine if the employee can go home to recover, or should report to healthcare.

- If a visitor answers "yes" to any screening questions or has a temperature at or above 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit confirmed with a thermometer, they should not be allowed entry.

Cleaning and Disinfection

- Fully clean and disinfect work area equipment and common areas at least daily, and at every shift change. Use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) registered disinfectants to sanitize surfaces that are also consistent with the facility's sanitation procedures required by United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

- Increase staffing for cleaning and disinfecting necessary to increase frequency of cleaning and disinfection throughout the facility including break areas, lunchrooms and bathrooms.

- If a worker becomes ill at work, their work area must be cleaned and disinfected immediately before another worker may be assigned to their work area.

- Check that you are following label directions and observing contact times to ensure cleaning and disinfection is effective.

- Pay special attention to high touch areas such as stair railings, tools, guards, doorknobs, computers, etc.

- Ensure the facility is adequately ventilated and use air filters in systems where this is feasible.

- CDC has issued guidance: **Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility**.

Centers for Disease Control
Coronavirus Webpage
CDC **Guidance** Documents

N.C. Department of Health and Human Services
COVID-19 Webpage

N.C. Department of Labor
Coronavirus Safety and Health Topic Webpage
Respiratory Protection Safety and Health Topic Webpage

N.C. State Government
COVID-19 Webpage

Federal Occupational Safety and Health
Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19
(English) (Spanish)
Coronavirus Safety and Health Topic Webpage
Various **Guidance Documents** *on COVID-19*

HA2250

Distancing

- Implement distancing guidelines in the facility.

- Implement operational changes that allow for workers' physical distancing of 6 feet as required by CDC guidelines and to effectively use personal protective equipment, including masks and face shields.

- Install partitions of plexiglass or stretched plastic on a frame of nonporous, smooth material to provide barrier protection between workers where physical distancing of 6 feet cannot be consistently maintained.

- Designate one-way entrances and exits in and out of the facility to support 6 feet physical distancing for workers.

- Designate an area for isolating workers who show symptoms of COVID-19 infection, such as a wellness area, isolated first aid station or other area where access can be restricted.

- Mark out 6-foot distances or circles for workers to stand in while they wait to punch in, to conduct health assessments, to perform handwashing, waiting for transportation and in other areas where workers would normally congregate.

- Mark out a 6-foot line in front of desks used by staff.

- Ensure 6-foot distances between chairs and people during meetings.

- Have designated staff monitor and instruct workers about compliance with distancing protocols and hygiene requirements.

- Routinely inspect, maintain, clean and disinfect separation barriers and other safeguards.

Production, Work-shift Schedules and Work-break Schedules

- Adjust line speeds so workers can maintain distancing.

- Stagger work schedules to prevent congregating in changing rooms, at entrances, transportation areas, health screening areas, and time clock areas.

- Revise break times to prevent congregating in cafeterias and breakrooms.

- Designate additional areas for breaks and meals.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Face Coverings

- Limit the use of filtering facepiece respirators by following other COVID-19 exposure control strategies and use of other facial coverings. Reference the **Respiratory Protection** Safety and Health Topic Webpage for more information.

- Require that all workers routinely wear cotton face masks, face coverings or disposable masks along with the standard PPE that is needed.

- Required PPE, along with training on appropriate donning, use and doffing, is to be provided and paid for by the employer.

Personal Hygiene

- Require and allow workers enough time to wash their hands frequently, including arrival and departure from workplace, before and after using the restroom, before eating and drinking, and after touching surfaces that may be contaminated.

- Have handwashing facilities easily available that can be accessed without workers congregating in groups.

- Maintain ample supplies of soap and hand towels for handwashing.

- Provide additional (portable) handwashing stations, where needed.

- Provide work areas with hand sanitizer and sanitizer wipes.

- Require cough and sneeze etiquette.

Communication

- Communicate with workers about actions being taken to prevent COVID-19 exposure through routine meetings, postings, including electronic postings, the company web site and start-of-day reminders.

- Institute a process for workers to report COVID-19 symptoms and other hazards in the workplace.

- Remind workers not to come to work if they are having symptoms of COVID-19 and fully inform and allow workers to use sick leave and other benefits if they are ill.

- Provide information in languages understood by workers and prominently post instructions and reminders about illness symptoms, handwashing and hygiene etiquette and to immediately report if they are feeling ill to a supervisor.

Orientation of COVID-19 Business Plan

- Provide an orientation for workers about the company's required COVID-19 business plan and the measures taken to minimize employee exposure to COVID-19, including changes to production and maintenance schedules and procedures, human resources policies and worker safety.

- Include information about the COVID-19, such as illness symptoms, methods of transmission, proper hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette and other safeguards to prevent exposure.

- Managers and supervisors will monitor the effectiveness of the COVID-19 business plan.

Business Travel

- Restrict or suspend business travel.

- Use virtual platforms for meetings when possible.

Working Remotely

- Allow workers to work remotely if they can perform their work.

- Limit workers in business offices to only those deemed critical to facility operations.

Visitor Restrictions

- Screen visitors prior to their arrival on site and confirm they have had no travel to destinations with widespread COVID-19 transmission within the past 14 days.

- Limit visitors to those essential to business operations and restrict where visitors can go within the facility.

Training Resources

- OSH **COVID-19** Webpage; Under "solutions" tab, provides PowerPoints, pre-recorded webinars, online videos, Podcasts, and other COVID-19 training resources.

EMPLOYMENT AND HUMAN RESOURCES ITEMS

Employment Status

- Clarify employment status with workers and contractors during the COVID-19 pandemic, including alternative work shifts, working from home, not working and wage changes.

- Clarify that discrimination against workers for any reason will not be tolerated and must be reported.

Incentive Programs

- Modify worker incentive programs, if necessary, to ensure workers stay home when they are sick to protect others working at the facility.

- Communicate clearly that workers will not face adverse consequences for staying home when they are sick.

Medical Assistance

- Consider waiving co-pays on medical appointments for COVID-19 related treatment.

- Provide access to medical professionals, including tele-medicine options, if an on-site nurse is not available.

- If a doctor's note is required to be absent from work, don't require employees to have a doctor's note in advance of approving an absence.

Isolation

- Workers showing symptoms of the COVID-19 virus must be isolated from other workers.

- Human resources should help arrange for sick workers to return home.

What can you expect if a worker is laboratory-confirmed with COVID-19?

- For laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases, N.C. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) may contact the ill worker. They may make recommendations about high-risk contacts of the infected person to stay at home (self quarantine) for 14 days. Reference DHHS **COVID-19** Webpage for more information.

When can an ill worker return to work?

- The ill person should stay at home and, if possible, have their own room and bathroom to reduce risk to other household members. They need to stay isolated at home until their symptoms have resolved and all three of these conditions are met:

  o Symptoms have improved (this can take up to 14 days) and,

  o At least seven days have passed since symptoms first appeared and,

  o At least three days have passed since fever has gone (without use of fever reducing medications).

What about co-workers of ill workers when there has not been a positive lab test?

- Co-workers (not part of an official quarantine or a facility quarantine) can report to work as long as they are symptom free. They will have to carefully follow the health and safety guidelines you have developed for the facility. See above discussion of health screening, temperature checks and use of masks.

How can I get help from the N.C. Department of Labor?

The N.C. Department of Labor, OSH Division provides consultations, training, and technical assistance at no cost to employers.

The OSH Complaint Desk should be contacted via telephone at 919-779-8560 and/or submit an **online complaint** if employees are exposed to serious hazards in their workplace associated with COVID-19 that their employers do not address.

The **Training Calendar** provides currently scheduled webinars. You may also request online training by going to our **Outreach Request Form**.

Questions regarding occupational safety and health can be submitted to the Standards Section of the Education, Training and Technical Assistance Bureau at **ask.osh@labor.nc.gov** or speak to a standards officer by calling 919-707-7876.

This document was created in April 2020 and may be subject to change.