DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

COVID-19 Health and Safety Guidelines for Food Processors and Manufacturers

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To minimize the risk from COVID-19 in the workplace, take the following steps:

Employee and Visitor Screening

Conduct screening each time employees or visitors enter the facility. Employee screening is a two-step process. All people entering the facility should first go through Step 1, initial screening.

Step 1: The initial screening involves verbally asking a series of five basic questions:

▪ 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:

  1. A new fever (100° F or higher) or feeling feverish?

  2. A new cough?

  3. Shortness of breath?

  4. A new sore throat?

  5. New muscle aches?

  Consult the Visitor and Employee Health Screening Checklist (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facilityhlthscreen.pdf).

Temperature screening can also be included in the initial screening; however, temperature screening alone is not effective. More than 25% of people with COVID-19 do not report fever or they report a low-grade fever.

Conduct temperature screening with a no-touch thermometer when it can be done with proper social distancing and hygiene, (e.g., use of a partition so that cough, sneezing, or talking droplets cannot reach the screener or employee). Additional suggestions can be found at: General Business Frequently Asked Questions (www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/general-business-faq.html).

Step 2: If a worker answers "Yes" to any of the screening questions or has an oral or ear temperature reading above 99.5° F, send the worker to the plant occupational health staff for further evaluation.

- The plant occupational health staff will determine if the employee can return to work, or should be seen by a healthcare provider, or should be tested per the plant's protocol, and then return home to self-isolate and wait for test results.

- Plant occupational health staff need to confirm that the employee can self-isolate (separate from others living in the same household). Local emergency management and local public health agencies can assist the employee if they cannot self-isolate.

Distancing

- Implement distancing measures in the facility, including operational changes that allow for workers' physical distancing of 6 feet required by CDC guidelines and to effectively use cloth mask and face shields as outlined below.

- Install partitions of a smooth, non-porous, durable, and easy-to-clean material such as plexiglass or stretched plastic on a suitable frame to provide barrier protection between workers where physical distancing of 6 feet cannot be consistently maintained. Ensure that any installations are part of the routine cleaning and disinfecting activities.

- Designate one-way entrances and exits in and out of the facility to support 6-foot 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, to wait for transportation, and in other areas where workers would normally congregate.

- When transporting workers, reduce the number of workers per trip to increase distance between passengers to 6 feet. Workers should wear cloth masks, and sanitize high-touch areas of vehicles between trips.

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

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

- Designate specific staff to monitor and instruct workers about compliance with distancing protocols and hygiene requirements.

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

- Refer to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance on Reducing the Spread of COVID-19 in Workplaces (www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/general-business-faq.html#Reducing-the-Spread-of-COVID-19-in-Workplaces).

Cleaning and Disinfection

- Food manufacturers are required to use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered sanitizer products in their cleaning and sanitizing practices and should continue to follow Current Good Manufacturing Practices for maintaining clean and sanitized facilities and food contact surfaces.

- In addition to sanitation already taking place, use sanitizing and/or disinfecting products to fully clean and sanitize other work area equipment and common areas at least daily, and at every shift change, including any partitions or additional equipment installed for maintaining distancing. Use EPA-registered disinfectants to disinfect surfaces.

- IMPORTANT: Check the product label guidelines for safe and recommended usage of these disinfectant and/or sanitizing products in food establishments. EPA guidance for Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2 (www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2).

- Ensure that workers are following label directions and observing contact times to ensure cleaning and disinfection are effective.

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

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

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

- Refer to the CDC-issued guidance: Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility (www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html).

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

Production, Work-Shift Schedules and Work-Break Schedules

- Adjust line speeds so workers can maintain distancing.

- Stagger work-shift schedules to prevent congregating in changing rooms, entrance areas, transport 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 Facial Coverings

- Require that all workers routinely wear cotton face masks, face coverings, or disposable masks in order to reduce spread, along with the standard PPE that is needed to perform regular job duties.

- Limit the use of filtering facepiece respirators (FFRs) by following other COVID-19 exposure control strategies and using other facial coverings. Re-evaluate where and when FFRs are used and consider changes to limit exposure to the hazardous substances that FFRs provide protection from. Continue to use appropriate PPE, such as respirators, if the task requires it for employee safety, such as sanitation.

- Provide the required PPE and facial covering, along with training, to all workers at no cost to the worker.

- Refer to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for guidance on Use of Respirators, Facemasks, and Cloth Face Coverings in the Food and Agriculture Sector During Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Pandemic (www.fda.gov/food/food-safety-during-emergencies/use-respirators-facemasks-and-cloth-face-coverings-food-and-agriculture-sector-during-coronavirus).

Personal Hygiene

- Require and allow workers sufficient time to wash their hands frequently, including at 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.

- Post handwashing instructions that are easily understood and include pictures or visual aids at handwashing locations. See the MDH website for more information and printable Hand Hyigene posters (www.health.state.mn.us/people/handhygiene/index.html).

- Maintain ample supplies of soap and single-use towels for handwashing.

- Provide additional handwashing stations, where needed.

- Provide non-food-manufacturing work areas, such as front offices and delivery vehicles, with hand sanitizer and sanitizer wipes. This is not a replacement for handwashing and proper cleaning and disinfecting or sanitizing, and should be kept outside of manufacturing areas.

- Reinforce practice of good cough and sneeze etiquette, including covering your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze. See the MDH website for more information and printable Cover Your Cough posters (www.health.state.mn.us/people/cyc/index.html).

- Avoid touching your face, including your eyes, nose, and mouth. Wash your hands after touching these areas of your body.

Communication

- Communicate with workers about actions being taken to prevent COVID-19 exposure through routine meetings (maintaining distancing); postings, including electronic postings; the company website; 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 remind them to report if they are feeling ill.

COVID-19 Business Plan Training

- Provide an orientation for workers about the company's COVID-19 Business Plan and the measures taken to minimize exposure to COVID-19, including changes to production, maintenance, human resources, and worker safety.

- Include information about the COVID-19 virus, such as illness symptoms, methods of transmission, proper hand washing, covering coughs and sneezes, use of facial covering, and other safeguards to prevent exposure.

- Assign monitoring of the effectiveness of COVID-19 Business Plan to managers and supervisors. Whenever changes in the plan are necessary, document them, and communicate changes to employees.

- See the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (DLI/MNOSHA) site for COVID-19 Preparedness Plan templates (www.dli.mn.gov/business/workplace-safety-and-health/mnosha-compliance-novel-coronavirus-covid-19).

Business Travel

- Restrict or suspend business travel.

- Use virtual platforms for meetings when possible.

Working Remotely

- Allow workers to work remotely if they are able to perform their work from a remote location.

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

Visitor Restrictions

- Do not admit unnecessary visitors, such as tours.

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

- Screen visitors prior to their arrival on site and do not admit visitors who answer "Yes" to the screening questions.

Other Workers, Shared Building, and Grounds Spaces

- Require other workers who enter the facility, such as cleaning crews, pest control contractors, and delivery or distributor drivers, to follow your COVID-19 Business Plan.

- Identify other activities or tenants that share space in the same building or grounds, even if it is occasional or seasonal, such as shared storage, loading docks, leased manufacturing space, etc., and make sure your COVID-19 Business Plan and training includes these areas and people, as appropriate.

Employment and Human Resources Items

Employment status

- Clarify work status with workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, including alternative work shifts, working remotely, 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 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.

Paid time off (PTO) and sick leave policies

- Allow flexibility on PTO accrual maximums. Allow workers to use PTO if they or someone in their household has symptoms of or tests positive for COVID-19.

- Relax attendance policies during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- If the established policy is to require a doctor's note to be absent from work, lift the requirement to have a doctor's note in advance of approving an absence.

Medical assistance

- Waive 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.

- Waive the five-day waiting period for short-term disability benefits for workers who are sick with COVID-19.

Isolation

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

- If so, 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, the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) will call the ill worker to interview them. MDH may make recommendations about high-risk contacts of the infected person to stay at home (self-quarantine) for 14 days.

When can an ill worker return to work?

- Both an ill person who tested positive and those who are ill but not tested should stay at home and, whenever possible, have their own room and bathroom to reduce spread to other household members. They need to stay isolated at home until their symptoms have resolved and all three of these conditions are met:

  - Symptoms have improved (this can take up to 14 days), AND

  - At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared, AND

  - At least 3 days have passed since fever has gone (without use of fever reducing medications).

Who Needs to Quarantine and When to Isolate?

People who are informed they were in contact with someone who tested positive for COVID need to quarantine.

People who have tested positive need to isolate.

What about workers who tested positive but have no symptoms?

Some employers have tested all employees, and some employees may test positive even though they have no symptoms. These people need to isolate themselves at home from others for 10 days from the date they were tested. If no symptoms develop, they can return to work. If the person becomes ill during that 10-day period, the isolation period starts over on the day their symptoms began, and they can return to work based on the conditions indicated above.

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

Co-workers who were not instructed by MDH to quarantine can report to work as long as they are symptom-free. They need to continue to follow the health and safety guidelines developed by the company.

Continued employee screening is critical for those returning to work.

Other Support Services

- Visible leadership that promotes a company culture of caring for workers and the community helps to reinforce a company's efforts to promote workplace safety and protect workers.

- Offer worker assistance services to deal with added stresses and financial impacts associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Current regulations for employer-provided housing do not provide for adequate social distancing and disease control measures to protect workers from the COVID. Whenever possible, provide housing environments that provide adequate space for social distancing and safe, effective personal hygiene practices.

If you provide housing, ill people must be separated from well people

- Discuss grouping options available for the operation. Each ill person should have a private room and a dedicated bathroom. If this is not feasible and there is more than one ill worker, ill workers may be grouped together but separated from non-ill workers. For ill people, consider using a large, well-ventilated room. In areas where ill workers are staying, keep beds at least 6 feet apart, use temporary barriers between beds (such as curtains), and request that ill people sleep head-to-toe.

- Separate ill workers with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 infections from ill workers with suspect COVID-19.

- Even if you don't normally provide housing, consider providing temporary housing to ill workers living in households where it is not possible to self-quarantine.

- Provide care to the worker while sick and recovering.

- If a worker tests positive for COVID-19 and lacks access to critical, essential items that would prevent them from self-isolating at home, contact local public health. Examples of these essential items might include access to groceries, thermometers, or assistance with finding a temporary isolation site while ill, if their current residence does not allow them to self-isolate.

- If the worker is at greater risk of developing severe illness (e.g., aged 65 years or older or with an underlying condition such as chronic lung disease, chronic heart disease, diabetes, cancer, or weakened immune system), call a health care provider. More information is available on the MDH website about Managing Chronic Conditions (www.health.state.mn.us/people/conditions/index.html).

- If the worker's symptoms are getting worse, help them seek health care by providing resources such as access to a phone, transportation, or other resources necessary to get needed care. For available assistance, refer to this Worker Resource Guide (www.dli.mn.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/worker_resource_guide.pdf).

- If the worker has trouble breathing, persistent pain, pressure in the chest, or other emergency signs (mn.gov/covid19/for-minnesotans/if-sick/is-it-covid/index.jsp), call 911.

▪ Follow CDC recommendations for Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting (www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html).

For More Information

Keep up to date on the latest information for businesses and workers, and update your COVID-19 Business Plan, as needed.

▪ Minnesota.gov Coronavirus Disease in Minnesota (mn.gov/covid19)

▪ Minnesota Department of Health Coronavirus Disease 2019 (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/index.html)

▪ Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development COVID-19 Information and Resources (mn.gov/deed/newscenter/covid)

▪ Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry Updates Related to COVID-19: (www.dli.mn.gov/updates)

▪ CDC's Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers Responding to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) (www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html)

▪ FDA's Food Safety and the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) (www.fda.gov/food/food-safety-during-emergencies/food-safety-and-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19)

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