

Meat and Poultry Packing Industry Interim Guidance from CDC and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Checklist Version 2: May 6, 2020

Exposure Risk Among Meat and Poultry Processing Workers

Distinctive factors that affect workers' risk for exposure to SARS-CoV-2 in meat and poultry processing workplaces include the following.

- Distance between workers – On processing lines, when clocking in or out, during breaks, or in locker/changing rooms.
- Duration of contact – Continued contact with potentially infectious individuals increases the risk of SARS-CoV-2 transmission.
- Type of contact – respiratory droplets in the air, contact with contaminated surfaces or objects, such as tools, workstations, locker rooms, and entrances/exits to the facility, or break rooms.
- Sharing transportation such as ride-share vans or shuttle vehicles, car-pools, and public transportation.
- Frequent contact with fellow workers in community settings in areas where there is ongoing community transmission.

Create a COVID-19 Assessment and Control Plan

Identify a qualified workplace coordinator, responsible for COVID-19 assessment and control planning (Coordinator).

- Employees should be able to identify and contact the coordinator.

Infection control and occupational safety and health plans should apply to anyone entering or working in the plant (*e.g.*, all facility workers, contractors, and others).

The worksite should be assessed periodically to identify COVID-19 risks and prevention strategies

- Establishment should consider the appropriate role for testing and workplace contact tracing of COVID-19-positive workers in a worksite risk assessment, following [available CDC guidance](#).

Controls

The [hierarchy of controls](#) approach should be used.

Engineering Controls

Configure employee environments so they are six feet apart in all directions, if possible.

- This approach includes workstation alignment along processing lines, if feasible.

Use physical barriers, such as strip curtains, plexiglass or similar materials, or other impermeable dividers or partitions, to separate meat and poultry processing workers from each other, if feasible.

Ventilation, including heating and air conditioning in work areas, should help minimize workers' potential exposures.

- Take steps to minimize air from fans blowing from one worker directly at another worker.
- Personal cooling fans should be removed from the workplace to reduce the potential spread of any airborne or aerosolized viruses.

Place handwashing stations or hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol in multiple locations to encourage hand hygiene.

- If possible, stations should be touch-free.

Add additional clock in/out stations spaced apart to reduce crowding in these areas, if possible.

- Consider alternatives such as touch-free methods or staggering times for workers to clock in/out.

Remove or rearrange chairs and tables, or add partitions to tables, in break rooms and other areas workers may frequent to enhance employee separation.

Identify alternative areas to accommodate overflow volume, such as training and conference rooms or using outside tents for break and lunch areas.

Administrative Controls

Promote social distancing.

- Encourage single-file movement with a six-foot distance between each worker through the facility, where possible.
- Designate a monitor to facilitate distancing on processing floor lines.
- Stagger break times or provide temporary break areas and restrooms to avoid crowding during breaks. Employees should maintain at least six feet of distance from others, including when on breaks.
- Stagger workers' arrival and departure times to avoid employee crowding in parking areas, locker rooms, and near time clocks.
- Provide visual cues (*e.g.*, floor markings, signs) to remind workers to maintain social distancing.
- Encourage workers to avoid carpooling to and from work, if possible

If carpooling or using company shuttle vehicles is a necessity for workers, the following control practices should be used:

Limit the number of people per vehicle as much as possible. This *may* mean using more vehicles.

Encourage employees to maintain social distancing in vehicle as much as possible.

Encourage employees to use hand hygiene before entering the vehicle and when arriving at the destination.

Encourage employees in a shared van or car space to wear cloth masks.

Clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces after each carpool or shuttle trip (*e.g.*, door handles, handrails, seatbelt buckles).

Encourage employees to follow coughing and sneezing etiquette when in the vehicle.

Administrative Controls continued...

Review leave and incentive policies.

- Analyze sick leave policies and consider modifying them to make sure that ill workers are not in the workplace.
- Make sure employees know and understand these policies.
- Analyze incentive programs and consider modifying them so employees are not penalized for taking sick leave if they have COVID-19.
- Additional flexibilities might include giving advances on future sick leave and allowing employees to donate sick leave to each other.

Consider grouping employees together.

- Consider cohorting or grouping employees together and assigning them to the same shift. Minimizing the number of employees who come into close contact may reduce transmission and the number of employees who may need to be quarantined.

Establish a system for employees to alert their supervisors if they are experiencing signs or symptoms of COVID-19 or if they have had recent close contact with a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 case.

Provide access to hand hygiene materials.

- Provide alcohol-based hand sanitizers containing at least 60% alcohol *if soap and water are not immediately available*.
- Place hand sanitizers in multiple locations to encourage hand hygiene. If possible, choose touch free hand sanitizer stations.

Consider other workplace programs to promote personal hygiene, such as:

Building in additional short breaks into schedules to increase time for employees to wash their hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizers.

Providing tissues and no-touch trash receptacles.

Educating workers that cigarettes and smokeless tobacco use can lead to increased contact between potentially contaminated hands and their mouth, and that avoiding these products may reduce their risk of infection

Administrative Controls continued...

Guidance on cloth face coverings in meat and poultry processing facilities.

- In addition to social distancing measures, CDC recommends cloth face coverings be worn, especially where employees cannot maintain 6 feet from others.
- It may not be practical for workers to wear a single cloth face covering for the duration of a work shift if it becomes wet, soiled, or otherwise visibly contaminated.
- If cloth face coverings are worn, employers should provide readily available clean cloth face coverings (or disposable facemask options) when the coverings become wet, soiled, or otherwise visibly contaminated.

Employers who determine that cloth face coverings should be worn in the workplace, should ensure the cloth face coverings:

- fit over the nose and mouth and fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face;
- are secured with ties or ear loops;
- include multiple layers of fabric;
- allow for breathing without restriction;
- can be laundered using the warmest appropriate water setting and machine dried daily after the shift, without damage or change to shape (a clean cloth face covering should be used each day);
- are not used if they become wet or contaminated;
- are replaced with clean replacements, provided by employer, as needed.
- are handled as little as possible to prevent transferring infectious materials to the cloth; and
- are not worn with or instead of [respiratory protection](#) when respirators are needed.

Education and Training

Educate and train workers and supervisors about how they can reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Supplement normal and required job training (*e.g.*, training required under OSHA standards) with additional training and information about COVID-19.

- Training should include recognizing signs and symptoms of infection, and ways to prevent exposure to the virus.
- Training should include how to implement the infection prevention and control measures recommended and be included in any infection prevention and control or COVID-19 response plans developed for the establishment

All communication and training should be easy to understand and should:

1. Be provided in languages appropriate to the preferred languages spoken or read by the workers, if possible;
2. Be at the appropriate literacy level; and
3. Include accurate and timely information, including information in the box below.

Employee information should include:

- Signs and symptoms of COVID-19, how it spreads, risks for workplace exposures, and how workers can protect themselves.
- Proper handwashing practices and use of hand sanitizer stations.
- Cough and sneeze etiquette.
- Other routine infection control precautions (*e.g.*, putting on or taking off masks or cloth face coverings and social distancing measures).

Posters in all appropriate languages should be posted encouraging sick employees to stay home, explaining coughing and sneezing etiquette, and discussing hand hygiene techniques.

Posters should be in the entrance to the workplace and in break areas, locker rooms, and other workplace areas where they are likely to be seen

Posters should be able to be read from a far distance.

Cleaning and Disinfection

Establish protocols and provide supplies to increase the frequency of sanitization in work and common spaces.

Disinfect frequently touched surfaces in workspaces and break rooms (e.g., microwave or refrigerator handles or vending machine touchpads) at least once per shift, if possible.

Remember ...

Workers who perform cleaning and disinfection tasks may require additional PPE and other controls to protect them from chemical hazards posed by disinfectants.

Employers must ensure their written hazard communication and training programs are up to date.

Screening and Monitoring Workers

Establishments should consider developing and implementing a comprehensive screening and monitoring strategy aimed at preventing the introduction of COVID-19 into the worksite.

Screening program should include screening workers before entry into the workplace, criteria for return to work of exposed and recovered, and criteria for exclusion of sick workers.

Screening of Workers for COVID-19

Options to screen workers for COVID-19 symptoms include the following.

- Screen before entry into the establishment.
- Provide verbal screening in appropriate languages to determine if employees have had a fever, felt feverish, or had chills, coughing, or difficulty breathing in the past 24 hours.
- Check temperatures of workers at the start of each shift to identify those with a fever of 100.4°F or greater (or reported feelings of feverishness).
- Do not let employees enter the workplace if they have a fever of 100.4°F or greater (or reported feelings of feverishness), or if screening results indicate that the individual may be ill.
 - Encourage individual to self-isolate and contact a healthcare provider.
 - Provide information on the facility's return-to-work policies and procedures.
 - Inform human resources, employer health unit (if in place), and supervisor.
- Ensure that personnel performing screening activities, including temperature checks, are appropriately protected from exposure to potentially infectious individuals.
 - Implement engineering controls, such as physical barriers or dividers or rope and stanchion systems, to maintain at least six (6) feet of distance between screeners and workers being screened.
 - If screeners need to be within six (6) feet of workers, provide them with appropriate PPE based on the repeated close contact the screeners have with other workers.
 - PPE may include gloves, a gown, a face shield, and, at a minimum, a face mask.
 - N95 filtering facepiece respirators (or more protective) may be appropriate for workers performing screening duties and necessary for workers managing a sick employee in the work environment

Managing Sick Workers

Individuals who appear to have symptoms upon arrival or who become sick during the day should be immediately separated and sent home.

Ensure that personnel managing sick employees are appropriately protected from exposure.

- When personnel need to be within six (6) feet of a sick colleague, appropriate PPE may include gloves, a gown, a face shield and, at a minimum, a face mask.
- N95 filtering facepiece respirators (or more protective) may be appropriate for workers managing a sick employee if that employee has signs or symptoms of COVID-19.

If an individual is confirmed to have COVID-19, employers should inform anyone they have come into contact with (including fellow workers, inspectors, graders, *etc.*).

The workstation and tools handled by the sick individual should be disinfected.

Employers should work with state, local, tribal and/or territorial health officials to identify potential exposed employees.

Addressing Return to Work

Employees exposed to COVID-19, but without symptoms, may continue to work, provided they adhere to additional safety precautions.

- Consultation with an occupational health provider and state and local health officials will help employers develop the most appropriate plan.

For Employees diagnosed with COVID-19, there are two recommended strategies for determining when the employee may return to work. The first is based on testing and the second is based on time since illness onset. One approach is not recommended over the other.

Test-Based Strategy

Exclude from work until:

- Resolution of fever *without* the use of fever-reducing medications; **and**
- *Improvement* in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); **and**
- Negative results of a Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Emergency Use Authorized (EUA) molecular assay for COVID-19 from at least *two* consecutive nasopharyngeal swab specimens collected ≥ 24 hours apart (total of two negative specimens).

Time Since Illness Onset Strategy

Exclude from work until:

- At least three (3) days (72 hours) have passed *since recovery* defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications **and** *improvement* in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); **and**
- At least ten (10) days have passed since symptoms *first appeared*.

Employees who have had signs/symptoms of COVID-19 should follow the same recommendations as individuals that tested positive.

Personal Protective Equipment

Employers must conduct a hazard assessment to determine if hazards are present, or are likely to be present, for which workers need PPE.

The results of that assessment will be the basis of workplace controls (including PPE) needed to protect workers.

Employers should:

- Use videos or in-person visual demonstrations of proper PPE donning and doffing procedures. (Maintain social distancing during these demonstrations.)
- Emphasize that care must be taken when putting on and taking off PPE to ensure that the worker or the item does not become contaminated.
- Provide PPE that is either disposable (preferred) or, if reusable, ensure it is properly disinfected and stored in a clean location when not in use.
- PPE worn at the facility should not be taken home or shared.

Face shields may serve as both PPE and source control.

If helmets are being used, use face shields designed to attach to helmets.

Face shields can provide additional protection from both potential process-related splashes and potential person-to-person droplet spread.

- Safety glasses may fog up when used in combination with masks or cloth face coverings.
- Only some face shields are acceptable substitutions for eye protection used for impact protection. Facilities should consult with an occupational safety and health professional concerning the use of face shields.

Face shields can help minimize contamination of masks and cloth face coverings.

- If used, face shields should be cleaned and decontaminated after each shift, and when not in use they should be kept in a clean location at the work facility.
- If used, face shields should also wrap around the sides of the wearer's face and extend to below the chin.

Employers should stress hand hygiene before and after handling all PPE.

Please Note:

When PPE is needed, employers should consider additional hazards created by poorly fitting PPE (*e.g.*, mask ties that dangle or catch, PPE that is loose and requires frequent adjustment or tends to fall off) and regarding the work environment (*e.g.*, machinery in which PPE could get caught).