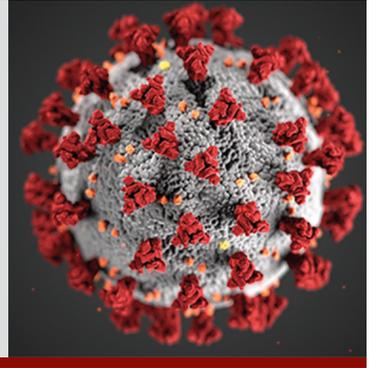


# Food Processing-Warehouse Coronavirus (COVID-19) Fact Sheet



## Prevent Worker Exposure to Coronavirus

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a serious workplace hazard that can be spread from one person to another when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Coronavirus can also be transmitted when a person touches a contaminated surface or object and then touches their own mouth, nose, or eyes.

Under Department of Labor & Industries (L&I) rules, employers are required to provide a safe and healthy workplace and to implement the governor's proclamation to prevent coronavirus transmission. [www.governor.wa.gov/news-media/inslee-announces-stay-home-stay-healthy%C2%A0order](http://www.governor.wa.gov/news-media/inslee-announces-stay-home-stay-healthy%C2%A0order).

The requirements discussed in this fact sheet are enforced by L&I using RCW 49.17, Chapter 296-307 WAC, and other applicable rules.

### To protect workers from coronavirus, employers are required to:

- Maintain social distancing (keep workers at least six feet apart) or use effective engineering/administrative controls;
- Ensure adequate hand washing facilities and frequent employee hand washing;
- Increase regular cleaning and sanitizing of common-touch surfaces;
- Make sure sick employees stay home (or are isolated) or go home, and that there are procedures for workers to report a suspected or confirmed coronavirus case; and
- Educate workers in the language they understand best about coronavirus and how to prevent transmission.

## Workplace Discrimination

It is against the law for any employer to take any adverse action such as firing, demoting, or otherwise retaliating against a worker they suspect of exercising safety and health rights such as raising safety and health concerns to their employer, participating in union activities concerning safety and health matters, filing a safety and health complaint or participating in an L&I Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH) investigation. Workers have 30 days to file a complaint with DOSH and/or with the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). [www.Lni.wa.gov/workers-rights/workplace-complaints/discrimination-in-the-workplace](http://www.Lni.wa.gov/workers-rights/workplace-complaints/discrimination-in-the-workplace)

### 1. Employers are required to implement an effective social distancing plan.

Employers must ensure all employees keep at least six feet away from coworkers and the public when possible. When strict social distancing is not possible for a specific task, other prevention measures are **required**, such as using barriers to block sneezes and coughs, and negative pressure ventilation.

### Suggestions to achieve social distancing for at least six feet of physical separation:

Facilitate physical (social) distancing at warehouse entrances, processing floors, maintenance shops, cold storages, breakrooms, and all other potential exposure areas.

- Limit the number of visitors and time spent by them in the warehouse.



Division of Occupational Safety and Health



[www.Lni.wa.gov/safety-health](http://www.Lni.wa.gov/safety-health)



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Washington State Department of  
Labor & Industries

- Stagger work schedules so workers don't crowd each other when they arrive and leave work.
- Stagger break and lunch times to prevent the gathering of groups of workers in limited areas.
- Appoint social distance safety monitors to ensure strict distancing requirements are maintained in all locations/rooms where there is more than one person.
- Arrange work areas to facilitate social distancing with a minimum of six feet between staff where feasible, and ensure staff follow social distancing protocols.
- Temporarily mark six-foot increments (using adhesive colored tape, chalk, etc.) on the ground or processing floor to ensure social distancing.
- Make provisions to prevent close contact between workers and others (coworkers, customers, the public) when transferring items, tools, or materials. For example, require one-at-a-time access at designated drop-off/pick-up points.
- Post signs that are readable from a far distance (or use portable, electronic reader boards) that inform visitors and workers of social distancing practices.
- Extend production lines so workers can be farther apart.
- Vacate every other 'like task' worker station on production lines.
- Reduce production speed to reduce the number of workers needed on the line. Running multiple shifts may allow for additional production.
- Train clerical personnel on how to protect themselves when interacting with visitors.

#### **Suggestions for mandatory alternate protections for tasks when six-foot spacing is not feasible:**

- Use physical barriers between workers to block direct face-to-face transmission.
- Use negative pressure ventilation in employee breathing zones at fixed work locations.
- Supply and institute mandatory, commercially-produced facemask policy, such as disposable non-health care use masks. If facemasks are used it must be in combination with physical barriers or some other engineering and/or administrative controls.

#### **Suggestions for interacting with visitors:**

- Stop all optional tours and non-required visits by the public.
- Ensure visitor logs are accurate and maintained.

- Train visitors on your company's site-specific coronavirus safety procedures.
- Limit visitors' time and scope of visit to essential business only.
- Stagger shipping and receiving orders to reduce potential exposure of transport personnel.

## **2. Employers are required to ensure frequent and adequate hand washing.**

- Install hand washing stations or hand sanitizing dispensers at warehouse entrances and at key locations inside for visitors and workers. Hand sanitizer is not a substitute for hand washing stations.
- Appoint a designated worker to replenish water in portable wash stations, single-use towels, and soap, along with emptying the trash.
- Require workers to wash hands frequently when they arrive at work, leave their workstations for breaks, use the bathroom; before and after they eat or drink or use tobacco; and after touching any surfaces or tool touched by others.
- Provide supplemental hand sanitizer stations, wipes or towelettes, or clean water and soap in portable containers to facilitate more frequent hand washing after handling objects touched by others.

**Consideration:** Gloves may be provided, but also must be washed regularly to prevent the spread of the virus or utilize disposable gloves. This may help workers whose hands are bothered by frequent washing and sanitizing.

## **3. Employers are required to increase cleaning and sanitizing schedules, and to disinfect workplace surfaces frequently to prevent coronavirus transmission.**

- Appoint designated sanitation worker(s) to continuously clean and disinfect surfaces on a significantly-increased schedule.
- When disinfecting for coronavirus, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommends using the longest recommended contact time and/or most concentrated solution per the label.
- Be sure to follow label directions for FOOD CONTACT SURFACES when using the chemical near or on utensils and food contact surfaces.
- Always wash and rinse visible dirt/debris from equipment before sanitizing.

- Ensure workers use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) for work tasks.
- Use protective gloves and eye/face protection (face shields and/or goggles) when mixing, spraying, and wiping with liquid cleaning products, like diluted bleach; you must provide a functioning eyewash station.
- Follow cleaning guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html)

#### **4. Employers are required to establish procedures to ensure sick workers are not at work.**

- Monitor employees for signs of illness and require sick workers to stay home or go home.
- Ensure employees know the signs and symptoms of the coronavirus.
- Any area where an ill employee worked must be closed, deep cleaned, and sanitized.

#### **Suggestions for ensuring that sick employees are not at work:**

- Notify co-workers who have come within six feet of a worker sick with coronavirus, without identifying the sick worker. Inform them of the measures being taken to keep employees safe, like cleaning and sanitizing.
- Seek and follow local health department and medical authority advice regarding sick employees.

#### **5. Employers are required to provide workplace hazard education to workers in the language they understand best about how to prevent Coronavirus transmission.**

The education must include:

- Information on how to report potential coronavirus exposures, symptoms and signs.
- How to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, including steps being taken in the workplace to establish social distancing, frequent hand washing, and other precautions including food safety practices.
- The importance of hand washing and how to effectively wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

- Proper respiratory etiquette, including covering coughs and sneezes and not touching eyes, noses, or mouths with unwashed hands or gloves.
- Emphasize cleaning and sanitizing of frequently-touched items, such as cell phones and tools.

#### **Suggestions for providing basic workplace education to prevent coronavirus transmission:**

- Hang posters/signs in appropriate languages from the health authorities (CDC, OSHA, L&I, WA DOH, etc.) about how to prevent coronavirus transmission.
- Communicate important safety messages/updates daily.

#### **Other protective measures and considerations**

- Alert warehouse managers or shift supervisors of strategies for handling visitors or workers who are not following physical distancing practices or who demonstrate signs of illness.
- Cover fabric and rough surfaces with smooth materials so they are easier to clean.
- Provide ways for workers to express any concerns and ideas to improve safety.
- Update warehouse Accident Prevention Program (APP) to include awareness and prevention measures for diseases and viruses.
- Employer-provided personal protective equipment may be helpful to further reduce transmission risk among healthy and asymptomatic workers.
- Face shields can prevent direct exposure to sneezes or coughs; they also provide splash protection from cleaning chemicals and disinfectants.
- Loose-fitting face masks or cloth face covers (like scarves and homemade masks) may be voluntarily worn by workers as a best practice measure to prevent the wearer from transmitting droplets from coughs and sneezes. It's important to understand that these types of face covers do not prevent inhalation of fine aerosols and are not protective in close proximity. If this type of protection is used, it should be washed and disinfected daily. Homemade masks are not an acceptable substitute for social distancing.
- Workers should not touch their mouths, noses, eyes, and nearby surfaces when putting on, using, and removing personal protective equipment and masks.

- Approved respirators such as N95s are not recommended for coronavirus prevention for healthy and asymptomatic workers. N95s or greater tightfitting respiratory protection are required for close exposure to people sick with coronavirus, those showing illness symptoms, or other normal chemical/pesticide exposures as previously evaluated or required under the label. Respirators require care in use and management under a program covered by the Respirator Rule. Agriculture employers must comply with Part Y-5 Respirators under Chapter 296-307 WAC to ensure proper use and care when respirators are necessary.
- Businesses are encouraged to coordinate with local health officials for timely, appropriate responses when they find out an employee has been diagnosed with active COVID-19.

## Resources

Call a consultant near you 1-800-547-8367 or email [DOSHConsultation@Lni.wa.gov](mailto:DOSHConsultation@Lni.wa.gov) for help  
[www.Lni.wa.gov/DOSHConsultation](http://www.Lni.wa.gov/DOSHConsultation)

The DOSH coronavirus website ([www.Lni.wa.gov/safety-health/safety-topics/topics/coronavirus](http://www.Lni.wa.gov/safety-health/safety-topics/topics/coronavirus)) includes resources from CDC, OSHA, and the Washington Department of Health.

Washington State Department of Health: 1-800-525-0127;  
[www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/Coronavirus](http://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/Coronavirus)

Local Health Jurisdictions and Tribes:  
[www.doh.wa.gov/ForPublicHealthandHealthcareProviders/PublicHealthSystemResourcesandServices/LHJandTribalDirectories](http://www.doh.wa.gov/ForPublicHealthandHealthcareProviders/PublicHealthSystemResourcesandServices/LHJandTribalDirectories)

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