

COVID – 19 Best Practices



May 20, 2020

Introduction to readers:

The information contained in this document represents current practices and ideas from participating members of the Agribusiness Talent Council, state and local guidelines, executive orders, and information from other companies in the region who have made their practices public. This document is not exhaustive and is subject to change as we continue moving forward in this unique and challenging time. The information presented has been developed with the intent of prioritizing the health and safety of employees. The agribusiness industry has a unique perspective as it has remained open throughout the pandemic and has learned a lot along the way. We are sharing this information in the hope that it may be useful to any company, of any size, in any industry.

Always refer to the most recent Executive Orders for up-to-date requirements:

https://www.michigan.gov/whitmer/0,9309,7-387-90499_90705---,00.html

Cleanliness and Social Distancing:

- Only allow critical workers that have essential duties to report on-site.
- Allow employees able to complete their essential duties from home to work remotely in accordance with your company's remote working guidelines or policies.
- Recommended safety measures for those reporting to work:
 - Minimize large gatherings whenever possible. Hold virtual staff meetings - if the technology isn't available, postpone or cancel.
 - Encourage employees to maintain physical distance even when on break, as well as before and after working hours.
 - Require employees to maintain physical distance when reporting to work, clocking in, leaving work and clocking out.
 - Ensure that employee workstations are no fewer than six feet apart.
 - Utilize flexible work hours whenever possible to limit the number of employees working on-site.
 - Adjust employee interactions with the public to allow for additional physical space.
 - Postpone or cancel non-essential travel.

Things you can provide as an employer:

- Non-medical grade face coverings (required if employees can't provide their own).
- Hand sanitizer in high traffic areas.
- Flexible scheduling, if possible.
- Clearly established policies and procedures to minimize virus transmission.
- Transparent communication from leadership on anything related to the virus and company decisions, strategy, future plans, etc.

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- Check-in stations for employees *before* they enter a facility, equipped with digital thermometers, questionnaires and other resources to promote cleanliness and social distancing.
- Established sanitation procedures, schedule and supplies.
- Clear guidelines on what to do if someone feels sick.
- A 30-day supply of PPE and sanitation items.

Things employees can do to minimize exposure:

- Clean workstations at the beginning and end of each shift.
- Avoid the use of other employees' phones, desks, offices or other work tools and equipment.
- Wash hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Use hand sanitizer when soap and water are unavailable.
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.
- Avoid handshakes or other physical contact.
- Avoid close contact with sick people.
- Practice respiratory etiquette, including covering coughs and sneezes.
- Immediately report unsafe or unsanitary conditions on company premises.
- Comply with company's daily screening processes.
- Seek medical attention and/or follow medical advice if experiencing COVID-19 symptoms.
- Comply with self-isolation or quarantine orders.

Some specific practices from employers in our council:

- Temperature checks: We're checking employees' temperatures each morning; if over 100.4 F, the employee is instructed to go home and HR is notified.
- Masks: All employees are required to wear a mask, except when at their desk alone.
- Social distancing: We're following the six feet social distancing recommendations by the CDC and adding engineering where that's not possible (example: plexi-glass).
- Ongoing sanitation: We added a checklist and sanitation schedules to all departments (conducted throughout the day).
- Sanitizer: We're providing hand sanitizer at all office work stations, lunchroom and conference rooms. Gloves are also available upon request.
- Communication/Training: We are conducting communication and/or training on a regular basis to keep the employees informed on the company's response and actions around COVID-19.
- Minimizing contact: The majority of internal doors remain open to reduce touch points for employees.
- Travel: All travel has been placed on hold.
- Conference Rooms: Small conference rooms are temporarily out of use for meetings. The large conference room has a max capacity of four people with social distancing and Zoom meetings are encouraged.

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- Break Room: Seating in the break room has been reduced. Only two chairs per table, and we are to follow social distancing.
- Work from Home: Some employees are able to work from home. This reduces crowding.
- Production separation: Teams are divided up; each team takes separated breaks.

Other considerations:

- Set up your own pandemic response team or a team of leaders to provide guidance, communication, action and updates on procedures as the situation continues to evolve. This group can also make determinations on other best practices to implement based on the unique setup of your organization.
- Do not overlook the importance of getting employee buy-in and trust as you call your staff back to work. Consider making re-opening an exciting event, emphasizing the positives of returning to work/normalcy.
- Establish company-specific protocols for isolating employees who become sick at work, or who recently tested positive for the virus and have been at work.
- Provide clear guidelines and company procedures for unique situations, such as employees refusing to return to work.
- Consider providing training to employees on how to operate safely, report unsafe practices, proper sanitation, and distancing procedures.

Here is the general SHRM response on what to do if an employee refuses to come back to work:

When an employee refuses to recall to work, the employer must carefully evaluate if the refusal is reasonable. Depending upon the circumstances, an individual may be unavailable for work due to COVID-19. It's possible that a stay-at-home order could still be in place where the individual lives, making him or her unable to travel to a work location unless his or her work is essential. The individual may also be caring for a child whose school or caregiving place is closed or still be caring for someone diagnosed with COVID-19. Also, he or she could have some reason to feel unsafe at the workplace due to the pandemic, which might be deemed acceptable.

Additionally, through the end of July 2020, unemployment recipients will receive an additional \$600 a week on top of their regular unemployment insurance entitlement through provisions under the CARES Act. In many cases, this will provide more money than the employee normally made when working, and these employees may feel less inclined to return to work before August, and therefore, refuse the recall. Employers may wish to advise these employees that the offer of work has been reported to the state, and unemployment benefits will stop as of the intended start date. Any dishonest statements made by the employee to the unemployment agency would be considered fraud and may be subject to penalties.

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Helpful links:

CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

Kent County Health Department: <https://www.accesskent.com/Health/coronavirus.htm>

West MI COVID-19 Business Coalition: <https://www.covidwm.org/>