MINNESOTA

Preparing for sick agricultural workers and COVID-19

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

For laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases, Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) will call the ill employee to interview them. They may make recommendations about high-risk contacts of the infected person to stay at home (self-quarantine) for 14 days.

The personal protective equipment (PPE) normally utilized at your workplace and the social distancing that you have instituted to limit person-to-person spread of COVID-19 among employees will influence the number of contacts who may be considered to be of high or medium risk during this process. If you have any questions, please call MDH at 651-201-5414.

What should you do if an employee is ill with symptoms of COVID-19?

People with a fever ≥100°F, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, runny nose, headache or muscle aches could have COVID-19.

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

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

2. At least seven days have passed since symptoms first appeared AND,

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

Co-workers 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, which should include:

- Social distancing. For example, staggering start times, break and lunch times, and careful attention to spacing workers six feet apart.

- Using personal protective equipment appropriate for the job. This could include washable coveralls, boots, latex or leather gloves, and masks (not surgical masks used and needed in health care).

- Washing hands often.

- Avoiding touching their face, nose, mouth, or eyes.

- Covering their coughs and sneezes.

- Monitoring for COVID-19 symptoms (fever, cough, difficulty breathing, other symptoms as listed above). Workers should stop work and self-isolate if they develop symptoms.

Household or intimate contacts are considered at higher risk of developing COVID-19. If a household or intimate contact of a worker develops a COVID-like illness, the worker should stay home and self-quarantine for 14 days and monitor for symptoms.

In general, co-workers of someone with COVID-19 can continue to work if they do not have symptoms, but they should watch for symptoms and stay home if they develop symptoms. A worker must understand that even with the mildest symptoms, he or she must stay home and there will be no consequences for their job. Employees should seek medical care if their symptoms worsen and they feel it's necessary. Advise them to call their doctor or clinic before they visit.

How can we decrease exposure at work?

Remember, COVID-19 is a respiratory disease that is spread person-to-person through droplets when a person coughs or sneezes. Social distancing and appropriate usage of PPE are the most important things you can do to keep your workers safe. Frequent handwashing, and cleaning and disinfection of environmental surfaces are also very important.

What can employees do to reduce the risk of COVID-19 at work?

- Stay home if you are sick.
- Tell your supervisor if you have a sick family member at home with COVID-19.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow. Throw used tissues in the trash and immediately wash hands with soap and water.
- Follow your workplace's social distancing guidelines and other recommendations for maintaining a six-foot space between workers.

How should farms plan for sick employees?

Employers should make redundancy plans for their essential employees. Plan to continue your essential functions, such as animal care and feeding. Cross-train employees to perform essential functions so the workplace can operate even if key employees are absent. For more information, see Businesses and Employers: COVID-19 (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/businesses.html).

Are there guidelines for how to clean and disinfect?

Yes, CDC has issued guidance on Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility (www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/disinfecting-building-facility.html).

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To obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-201-5414.