

GUIDANCE FOR FOOD PROCESSING FACILITIES

Overview

Under current Chief Medical Officer of Health Orders, businesses and entities are required to:

- Implement practices to minimize the risk of transmission of infection among attendees;
- Provide procedures for rapid response if an attendee develops symptoms of illness;
- Ensure that attendees maintain high levels of sanitation and personal hygiene;
- Comply, to the extent possible, with the [COVID-19 General Relaunch Guidance](#), this guidance, and any other applicable Alberta Health guidance found at: <https://www.alberta.ca/biz-connect.aspx>.

This document has been developed to support food processing facilities in reducing the risk of transmission of COVID-19 among attendees (including workers, volunteers, patrons and the general public). The guidance provided outlines public health and infection prevention and control measures, specific to food processing operations.

This document and the guidance within it is subject to change and will be updated as needed. Current information related to COVID-19 can be found: <https://www.alberta.ca/covid-19-information.aspx>

This guidance is not intended to address occupational health and safety (OHS) requirements. OHS questions and concerns can be directed to the OHS Contact Centre by telephone at 1-866-415-8690 (in Alberta) or 780-415-8690 (in Edmonton) or [online](#).

COVID-19 Risk Mitigation

General Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Set clear policies and procedures that align with public health orders and the applicable legislated requirements. This includes adjusting operations and staffing and putting safe work procedures in place to support:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Physical distancing,○ Hand hygiene,○ Coughing and sneezing etiquette,○ Cleaning and disinfection practices.• Post signage in high visibility locations to remind workers and visitors about public health orders and work site requirements.• Provide the necessary staff, training, equipment and supplies to ensure policies and procedures are followed.• Ensure that workers are advised of the following:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Health hazards associated with the virus and how to minimize exposure and its spread.○ Proper use of and care for personal protective equipment (PPE), and its limitations,○ Risks and health and safety precautions when using supplies such as cleaning products and disinfectants, and○ Procedures developed to minimize worker exposure to the virus.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Address any health and safety concerns raised by workers, supervisors, joint work site health and safety committees or health and safety representatives.• Allow entry only to essential visitors (e.g. inspectors, public health officials, occupational health and safety officers, required maintenance and service technicians or contractors).<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Notify visitors of work site requirements in advance.
Screening & Rapid Response Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Screen all individuals (e.g. workers, contractors, delivery, repair persons, visitors) for symptoms before allowing entry into the facility using the Alberta Health Daily Checklist.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Do not allow individuals to enter or work in the facility if they are sick.○ The Alberta Health Services COVID-19 Self-Assessment tool can be used by visitors.• Symptomatic individuals should be directed to use Alberta Health Services' COVID-19 Self-Assessment or contact 811 for screening and testing. A rapid response plan sets out a fast-action plan for employers, supervisors and workers when a worker or visitor shows symptoms or tests positive for COVID-19.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Develop a plan that includes visitor- and worker-specific policies and procedures.○ For more information on rapid response plans, see COVID-19 General Relaunch Guidance.• Supervisors and workers need to know and follow employer's rapid response plan if a worker starts feeling symptoms during a shift. This should include:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Immediately isolating them from other others,○ Cleaning and disinfecting all surfaces that they may have come into contact with,○ Require hand hygiene and masking of the individual, and○ Remove the worker from the workplace as soon as possible.• Do not send symptomatic workers home to isolate in work-provided dormitories.• Careful attention should be paid toward assisting sick workers in finding safe locations to isolate. This includes:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Supporting the worker and their family, however necessary, in preparing for 10-day isolation,○ Supporting workers who live with vulnerable family members, and• Referring the worker to Alberta Health Service's COVID-19 Self-Assessment for assessment and testing.• Do not allow symptomatic workers to carpool, use public transportation or take work shuttles when going home.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Symptomatic workers may be sent home in hired taxis or in dedicated single-passenger shuttles provided by the workplace. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If by taxi, notify the taxi driver that the individual is symptomatic and advise them to refer to guidelines available for taxis and rideshare companies. • If in a shuttle, ensure that procedure and processes for cleaning and sanitizing are known and in place.
<p>Reporting Illness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If two or more workers are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, follow normal outbreak notification procedures. • Report to Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) any incidents where a worker at the work site is exposed to a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 and conduct an internal investigation. • Incidents require reporting to OHS include when: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A worker is confirmed to have COVID-19 and the employer has reason to believe that the exposure occurred at work, or, ○ A worker is exposed to a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 and, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The work site did not follow the rules, procedures, and guidance related to COVID-19 protection, or ▪ The COVID-19 controls in place have failed. ○ The internal investigation must be conducted with the participation of the health and safety committee or health and safety representatives. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Once the investigation is complete, the employer must write a report and provide that report to OHS and the health and safety committee, health and safety representative or workers. ○ For more information read Reporting and investigating potentially serious incidents. • Reporting COVID-19 exposure to OHS is separate from any notice the employer must give to the Workers' Compensation Board or other government departments.
<p>Requirement to maintain contact information for all staff, workers, volunteers, and visitors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support public health contact tracing efforts in the event that an individual who is or has been onsite tests positive, collect the names and contact information of all staff, workers, volunteers and visitors, and maintain records of daily attendance. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Contact lists should contain the full name and contact information (telephone number, email, and physical and mailing address) of each individual. ○ Food processing facilities must notify staff, workers, volunteers, and visitors about the purpose and legal authority for the collection. ○ Attendance lists and contact information will only be requested by Alberta Health Services if a potential exposure occurs onsite.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Records should only be kept for 2 weeks. An organization must make reasonable security arrangements to protect the personal information. ○ Any personal information that is collected for COVID-19 contact tracing can only be used for this purpose, unless an individual provides their consent. ● For more information, the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner has released Pandemic FAQ: Customer Lists about collecting personal information from customers during the COVID-19 pandemic.
<p>Hazard Assessment and Control</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review existing hazard assessments and revise to address any new hazards introduced. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Perform a hazard assessment to identify existing or potential hazards. Wherever possible, hazards must be eliminated. When elimination is not possible or reasonable, they must be controlled. ● When addressing the hazards, follow the hierarchy of controls: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Engineering controls: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Engineering controls control the hazard at the source and are the first option if you can't eliminate a hazard. Physical barriers such as Plexiglas, strip curtains or other impermeable dividers between workers is one example of an engineering control. Using adequate ventilation to help minimize workers' potential exposure is another example. ○ Administrative controls: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Administrative controls are the next option. These change the way people work – for example, physical distancing, stagger break times, and enhanced cleaning and disinfection. ○ Personal protective equipment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PPE is the third option. PPE must meet and be used in accordance with OHS code requirements, including worker training in selection, care, use and maintenance of PPE. Gloves, protective clothing, eye protection and respirators are some examples of PPE. ● Consider a mix of engineering and administrative controls and PPE to protect workers. ● Ensure workers know about health hazards associated with the virus and how to minimize exposure and its spread. ● For more information read Respiratory viruses and the workplace and Hazard assessment and control handbook.
<p>Physical Distancing</p>	<p>Production floor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rearrange floor plans or reconfigure work stations to allow for 2 metres (6 feet) between stationary workers.

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- Provide visual cues (e.g. floor markings, signs) to remind workers to maintain distancing.
- Use physical barriers to separate processing line workers from each other.
- Schedule operational activities to avoid multiple crews (e.g. food processing and cleaning crews) on the floor at once.
- Where feasible, adjust the number of shifts per day to minimize exposure.
 - A plant that normally operates one daytime shift may be able to split workers from one shift into 2 or three shifts over a 24-hour period.
 - One of the shifts may need to be reserved for cleaning.
- Consider grouping workers to reduce the spread of the viral hazard.
 - Assign the same groups of workers to the same shifts to reduce exposure to the virus.
 - Should workers require quarantining, grouping may reduce the number of workers in isolation.
- Postpone non-essential maintenance or servicing, or perform after hours.
- Control traffic flow on the floor.
 - Direct traffic through aisles and around stations to limit contact.
 - Stagger workers' work times to avoid congregations of workers in one place.
- Reduce worker movement within the facility by assigning specific production floor and break areas (e.g. lunch room) to workers.
- Where physical distancing or barriers cannot be instituted, provide appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) for workers.
 - PPE must meet and be used in accordance with OHS code requirements, including worker training in selection, care, use and maintenance of PPE. Gloves, protective clothing, eye protection and respirators are some examples of PPE.

Offices and common areas

- Stagger worker arrival/departure times, lunchtimes, breaks and meetings to minimize the number of workers in one place (e.g. parking lots, locker rooms and near time clocks).
- Designate lockers, storage spaces, and tools and equipment for each worker.
- If tools or equipment must be shared, clean and disinfected after each user.
- Restrict lunch room and common area access.
- Remove shared items such as dishes and cutlery and difficult-to-clean items such as newspapers or magazines.
- If workers need certain common areas (such as a prayer room) at a particular time, consider designating temporary supplemental space to ensure physical distancing requirements can be maintained.

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	<p>Shipping and receiving area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Set up procedures for shipping and receiving, and warehouse or distribution centres that support physical distancing as well as enhanced hygiene and cleaning practices.• Share facility COVID-19 procedures with delivery drivers prior to their arrival.• Schedule delivery/pick up times and requirements in advance.• Replace in-person signature requirements and paper copies with options such as e-signatures and email receipts.• Consider contactless delivery where feasible.• Have drivers wait in their vehicles or a designated area to limit contact if they are not required to unload the shipment. <p>Communications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hold meetings and communicate virtually or by phone whenever possible.• If you must meet in person, follow best practices including physical distancing between meeting attendees.• If you have a building intercom system, use it for strategic reminders about safe work procedures during shifts. This doesn't replace supervision or feedback from supervisors, but may mean that supervisors will have to do fewer person-to-person reminders in the course of their walk-arounds.
<p>Enhanced Hygiene and Cleaning</p>	<p>Hygiene</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Post signs that remind everyone in the facility about basic hygiene, such as:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Wash hands often, with soap and running water, for at least 20 seconds.○ If soap and running water are not available, use alcohol based hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol.○ Avoid touching your face, mouth, nose or eyes with unwashed hands.○ Sneeze or cough into a bent elbow, and promptly disposing of used tissues in a lined garbage bin.• Support hygienic practices at your facilities, such as:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Build additional short breaks into work schedules to increase frequencies of hand cleaning.○ Provide disinfectant wipes and hand sanitizer to workers and visitors, especially in common areas and at entrances/exits.○ Provide disposable coveralls or designated uniforms that are laundered by a laundry service provider.

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- Submit all documents, such as reports and forms, electronically or wash hands after handling papers.
- If a face mask is required, ensure that:
 - The type of face mask chosen is correct for the hazard and protects workers.
 - The face mask is in a condition that it will provide the proper protection (e.g. clean, undamaged).
 - Workers are trained in the correct use, care, limitations, and assigned maintenance of the face mask, and the face mask does not itself endanger the workers.
 - Wash or sanitize hands just before putting it on, before taking it off, and again after taking it off.
 - Make sure it fits well (doesn't gape).
 - Keep it clean and safely stored, for personal use only (no sharing).
 - If it is a disposable face mask, make sure it is changed when soiled and disposed of properly.
 - If it is a reusable face mask, make sure it is changed when soiled or after each shift and properly stored and cleaned before reuse.
 - Face masks are used only in addition to other control measures.
 - When using face masks, consider use of face shields, when possible, to minimize contamination of masks.
 - Face masks must not be worn with, or instead of, respiratory protection when respirators are needed.

Cleaning and disinfecting

- Increase ventilation and fresh air return in your facility as much as possible and ensure proper evacuation of air so that air currents do not increase the risk of transmission.
- Schedule regular cleaning and disinfecting of tools used.
 - A good time to clean and disinfect is when workers change work stations or move to a new set of tools.
- Build time into daily operational schedule to deep clean the entire facility.
- Clean and disinfect high-traffic areas and high-touch surfaces more frequently. This includes physical barriers used to separate workers.
- Keep washrooms clean and well-stocked with soap and paper towels.
- Ensure workers are trained on the hazards associated with cleaning and disinfecting agents and safe use procedures including PPE and storage.
- Provide ample waste disposal options throughout the facility.
- Line waste containers with plastic bags for safer garbage disposal.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use disposable gloves when performing higher risk activities such as handling garbage or cleaning.• Ensure workers are properly trained on the safe use and disposal of gloves, including how to put them on and take them off safely.
Carpooling	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If carpooling is a necessity for workers, implement measures to help get your workers to their jobs safely. Control measures might include the following:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Limit the number of people per vehicle so that distancing can be achieved.○ Provide company shuttle bus options that meet physical distancing requirements.○ Require workers to clean hands before entering the vehicle and when arriving at the destination.○ Require workers in a shared vehicle space to wear masks, including cloth masks.○ Require workers to clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces (e.g., door handles, handrails, seatbelt buckles) after each carpool or shuttle trip.• Provide training, supplies and/or equipment to keep carpool vehicles as safe, clean and disinfected as possible.
Contact Us	<p>OHS Contact Centre (Complaints, questions, reporting serious incidents)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anywhere in Alberta 1-866-415-8690• Edmonton & surrounding area 780-415-8690• Deaf or hearing impaired 1-800-232-7215 (Alberta) 780-427-9999 (Edmonton) <p>Alberta Health Services (COVID-19 public health order violations) ephisahs.albertahealthservices.ca/create-case</p> <p>OHS Online Incident Reporting (Potentially serious, mine or mine site incidents) oirportal.labour.alberta.ca/pre-screening</p>