Pandemic Preparedness Plans and CHAMP Lite Tool

Important information and resources for agriculture operations developing pandemic prepardness plans and implementing mitigation strategies that reduce exposure risks to COVID-19.

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What is COVID-19

COVID-19, the infectious disease caused by novel coronavirus, is a respiratory disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus that reached pandemic status in early 2020. The virus is highly contagious and can be transmitted through air in droplet and aerosol form and by contact with contaminated surfaces. In order to minimize impact on businesses, workers, and the public, it is incumbent upon employers to develop and implement operation and task specific risk mitigation strategies aimed at protecting themselves, their employees, and the public.

Pandemic Preparedness Plans

Issued May 1, 2020, Executive Order 2020-70 contained the *initial* requirement for the development and implementation of health and safety practices aimed at mitigating spread of COVID-19 between and amongst workers, and between workers and the general public at public-facing operations. These requirements included provisions for:

- The identification/assignation of a pandemic preparedness responsible individual to develop, coordinate, implement, and perform ongoing effectiveness review of a COVID-19 pandemic preparedness plan.
- Symptom screening and prevention of workers from entering the premises if sick or if in contact with an individual with a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19.
- Social distancing.
- Use of personal protective equipment (PPE) if and when necessary to prevent disease transmission
- Increasing standards of facility cleaning and disinfection.
- A written COVID-19 preparedness and response plan consistent with CDC and OSHA guidance made available at the workplace.

Resources to Develop Pandemic Preparedness Plan for individual businesses and operations

COVID-19 Hazard Assessment and Mitigation Plan (CHAMP) tool, is available to assist the Michigan agriculture community in assessing risk for the spread of COVID-19 in their operations. This tool will help users identify risk factors for the spread of COVID-19 and develop effective task-specific mitigation strategies and, ultimately, a written pandemic preparedness plan consistent with business operations. The CHAMP tool can be used as a framework for compliance with the State of Michigan requirements for essential and open businesses under the Governor's Executive Orders. This tool is being routinely updated to reflect new requirements that are put into place as executive orders are refined or added.

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Frequently Asked Questions

A list of frequently asked questions has been compiled from MSU-hosted webinars and Q&A sessions. Responses are provided below. Additions to this list will be made as questions are received.

Health screening requirements

Are employers required to screen employees for COVID-19 symptoms?

Employers are asked to implement a daily employee health screening program that includes the evaluation of symptoms consistent with COVID-19, the infectious disease caused by novel coronavirus. This includes but is not limited to screening for the following symptoms: headache, congestion or runny nose, fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, sudden loss of taste and smell, and/or diarrhea. A full list of COVID-19 symptoms can be found on the CDC website.

- It is suggested that employers screen employees for fever using a touchless thermometer. If not available, verbal confirmation of lack of fever by the employee is acceptable, but not preferred.
- If the employee reports experiencing any of the aforementioned symptoms or has a fever exceeding 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit, the employee must not be allowed in the workplace and should contact a personal healthcare provider for further guidance.
- When conducting screening procedures, employees responsible must be trained as to how to prevent exposure during screening, including but not limited to the use of PPE, barriers, touchless thermometers, and how to respond to a worker who indicates they are experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19 or have been in recent contact or is living with an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19.

Are there resources available to help train employees on the signs and symptoms of COVID-19?

There are multiple resources available to assist employers with training employees on the signs and symptoms of COVID-19. The MSU Extension CHAMP tool contains a 'resource' tab that includes posters and other printable resources from the CDC on communicating the Symptoms of Coronavirus (COVID-19) and guidance from MIOSHA on workplace safety that includes videos and State of Michigan branded printable posters.

Is there a template available for employee screening programs?

Interactive screening questionnaires are available and may be useful for employers to screen employees prior to leaving for work as they can email or send a screen shot of their responses to a designated individual at the

workplace, or they can complete the form once they have arrived on site. Health screening resources can also be found in the CHAMP Lite tool.

Is there an interactive screening questionnaire available for Spanish speaking employees?

An interactive screening questionnaire for Spanish speaking employees is available for employers to utilize at their operations. This information can also be found in the CHAMP Lite tool.

Is there an app available for employee health screening?

There are several apps available to businesses for conducting employee health screenings. Agricultural operations and businesses should fully evaluate the applications and cost to their specific operation to determine suitability prior to requiring their use.

- MI Symptoms is a free online employee health screening and reporting tool offered by the State of Michigan that employers can use as a resource to complete the requirements of daily employee health screening.

Cleaning and disinfection protocols

In order for agriculture operations and businesses to reduce the risk for spread of COVID-19, enhanced cleaning and disinfection protocols are required. This includes the cleaning and then disinfecting of public spaces utilized by employees and visitors and cleaning and disinfection of shared items (e.g. tools, vehicles) using EPA List-N disinfectants. Common questions regarding cleaning and disinfection are summarized below:

How should common spaces utilized by employees be managed (i.e. break rooms, bathrooms, etc.) at our operation?

All common areas should be routinely cleaned and disinfected according to a pre-determined schedule and by assigned individuals trained to complete the task safely and effectively. Cleaning and disinfection protocols should include commonly touched areas such as doorknobs, faucets, tables, and appliances. It is suggested that employees clean their hands (hand washing or hand sanitizing) prior to entering common spaces. Guidance on proper cleaning and disinfection protocols can be found on the CDC website.

If an operation provides bathroom facilities for the public (e.g. porta-potties for u-pick operations), how should those locations be managed?

These areas should be cleaned and then disinfected routinely using cleaning agents specified by EPA List-N disinfectants. Other suggestions for the management of bathroom facilities include:

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- The cleaning and disinfecting schedule should be recorded on a log sheet that includes time cleaned and individual responsible.
- Communication using signage that states that the facilities have been routinely cleaned and disinfected.

What are recommended products for cleaning and disinfection of common areas, tools and equipment?

A number of different products meet the **EPA's criteria** for use against SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. These products can be found on EPA List N that summarizes disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19).

Operational questions for businesses

Our operation regularly provides meals for our employees, is that ok?

When providing meals or refreshments for your employees you should offer selections that are "grab and go." An example of this would be a boxed lunch offering where social distancing can occur. Instruction should be given to employees to observe social distancing guidelines when partaking in the meals offered.

- Care should be taken to not offer buffet style meals as this may lead to cross contamination.

Are there specific practices that should be implemented for U-Pick operations?

Specific guidance for U-Pick operations aimed at ensuring the safety of all employees and customers is available from Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD). Some suggested practices for agricultural operations that have customer/public interactions include:

- Ensure activities can be completed per social distancing guidelines ($\geq$ 6ft between individuals).
- Increase the cleaning and sanitation of tools, equipment or items commonly used.
    - Visitors may be asked to provide their own u-pick containers.
    - If the operation provides re-usable containers for picking, they should be cleaned and disinfected between each use.
    - Consider using one-time use (disposable) containers to limit cross-contamination.
- Sanitize common touchpoints such as, counters and scales between customer interactions.
- Offer hand washing or sanitizing areas.
- Provide signage communicating COVID-19 farm practices.
- Separate the produce weighing process from payment processing areas to avoid bottlenecks in customer flow and encourage adequate social distancing.
- Additional resources, along with suggested guidelines from the CDC and MIOSHA for agricultural operations, can be found in the MSU Extension CHAMP tool on the resource tab.

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Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) considerations

What type of PPE should I be providing for my employees?

First and foremost, PPE specific for COVID-19 must not replace the requirement to wear PPE that is in place to protect workers from chemical, physical, or biological hazards (e.g. requirement for use of a tight-fitting respirator during pesticide application). It is important to note that the requirement for PPE aimed at mitigating spread of COVID-19 is dependent on many factors including the type of task or job to be performed, the number and proximity of employees performing the task or job, and whether the task or job takes place indoors or outdoors, etc. At a minimum, use of cloth face coverings are required by the current executive order. Face coverings combined with face shields when individuals are working less than 6 feet apart is a practice that has been determined to be effective in mitigating spread when other engineering or administrative controls are not feasible. This, along with frequent hand washing or sanitizing, are basic principles to be implemented on any operation where workers and/or the public comingle.

- When evaluating PPE for use in a given operation, considerations should include function, fit, ease of decontamination, disposal, and cost. In some situations, the purchase of more durable/reusable PPE can be more cost effective than disposable PPE.

- For specific questions regarding suggested PPE for agricultural operations, it is recommended that the MSU Extension CHAMP tool be reviewed. Questions addressing PPE can also be sent to Melissa Millerick-May with MSU Extension.

What control options or PPE are available for operations that require people to be in close contact with each other (e.g. packing or processing line)?

Exposure mitigation strategies are based on job/task and risk level. Control measures fall into four categories: engineering, administrative, safe work practices, and personal protective equipment (PPE). Strategies for controlling spread of COVID-19 in the workplace must be consistent with the task at hand and *not interfere* with control measures in place aimed at preventing exposures to existing chemical, biological, and physical hazards. Suggestions for mitigation strategies could include (individually or in combination):

- Installation of physical barriers (plexiglass) where feasible.
- Utilize alternative spacing for employees working in close contact with each other.
- Investigate the use of administrative controls where possible to split shifts/minimize number of workers on-site (or in a location) at any one time.
- Adjust break times to minimize the number of workers in a lunchroom or break room at any one time.
- Increase ventilation (e.g. increase number of air exchanges per hour (% fresh air), open windows and doors, etc.) in buildings.

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- Provide and require the use of face masks by workers and require customers (the public) to wear face masks within the establishment to contain respiratory secretions.
- Limit access to the worksite by outside entities and the public and restrict entry to pre-specified areas only.
- Increase frequency of cleaning and disinfection of commonly touched surfaces.
- Implement strategies to limit face to face contact (use of drive-through windows, phone/internet ordering, curbside-pickup).

Employers must train workers on expectations including practices and procedures that are aimed at mitigating spread of disease (handwashing, cleaning and sanitizing workspaces and equipment, appropriate use of PPE). Employers must also institute an effective means of communicating important COVID-19 information to employees and regularly monitor state and local requirements specific to mitigating spread of COVID-19. These and other control measures are summarized in the MSU Extension CHAMP Lite tool.

Travel restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic

Are there restrictions for employees that travel to high-risk states or are they expected to participate in a quarantine period once they return to Michigan?

Direction for employers, regarding the management of employees that travel to high-risk states is fluid. A good practice is for employers to frequently review the current executive orders and guidance from their local health department for updates on travel restrictions.

Response plans and positive test results

I would like to create a response plan in case an employee tests positive in my operation. Is there a template available?

Agriculture operations and businesses can take steps toward preparedness by formulating response plans that address circumstances in which an employee tests positive for COVID-19 while working. The CDC has developed guidelines for these situations. Depending on local circumstances, these guidelines may be adapted by the state or local health departments to ensure a rapid and effective response. There are also recommendations as to when employees may return to work after COVID-19 exposure or infection.

Example of protocols that could be established in a response plan include:

- Establishing cleaning and disinfection protocols for facilities where an employee is suspected or has been confirmed to have COVID-19.
- Develop protocols for closing off rooms or areas used by the suspected or ill person to ensure surfaces have been thoroughly cleaned and then disinfected.

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- Create a notification plan should a worker test positive for COVID-19 that includes advising co-workers to contact their personal physician or health department for recommendations on testing and potentially the need for quarantine given the type of interaction (risks for exposure, e.g. working <6ft apart for more than 15 minutes).

Who do I need to contact when an employee tests positive?

If you have a situation where one of your employees tests positive for COVID-19, you will need to contact your local health department. They will help guide you through the response process, give recommendations for cleaning and sanitizing the area, and provide contact trace-back for the case. You will also need to notify other employees who have had contact with the individual that has tested positive. Businesses that have public/customer interaction should create a communication plan that includes the designation of media relations personnel and how information is released in the event of a positive diagnosis.

Take care of yourself and your employees

The unparalleled nature of the current pandemic has brought about socially and economically stressful situations that may feel unfamiliar, confusing, and overwhelming. It is important to understand that this is a shared experience, these feelings are normal, and that there are people ready to listen and help if needed. Below are resources that focus on mental health and well-being.

- Managing Farm Stress - Michigan State University Extension
- COVID-19 Mental Health and Well-Being Resources – American Association of Swine Veterinarians
- Mental Health and Coping during the Coronavirus Pandemic – U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services

Additional resources

Answers to questions and additional resources are available by contacting:

Melissa Millerick-May – MSU Extension - Health & Safety Resource
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