



NGFA Safety Tips: Coronavirus Disease 2019

Reducing Industry Impact by Developing Continuity of Operations Plans

To reduce the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on grain, feed, processing, milling and export facility employees, customers and contractors, and to enable this sector to continue to function efficiently, it is important for companies to develop continuity of operations plans to address specific exposure risks, sources of exposures and other characteristics unique to each type of process and facility.

Each company and facility should use the guidance contained herein as a starting point to determine COVID-19-related workplace risk levels and appropriate protective measures, such as use of personal protective equipment (PPE), social distancing and sanitizing. This NGFA guidance has been derived from information developed by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and other federal agencies. The U.S. [Department of Homeland Security has designated](#) grain and oilseed handlers, processors and distributors; human and animal food manufacturers, including animal feed, ingredients and pet food; farm suppliers; agribusinesses; transporters; and others as “essential critical infrastructure” sectors – and their employees as “critical infrastructure workforce” – whose continued operations are important to maintaining public health and safety, and economic and national security.

About COVID-19 ...Symptoms

Infection with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, can cause illness ranging from mild to severe and, in some cases, can be fatal. Symptoms typically include fever, cough, sore throat and shortness of breath. Some infected with the virus have reported experiencing other non-respiratory symptoms. Other people, referred to as *asymptomatic cases*, have experienced no symptoms at all, but can transmit the virus. According to CDC, symptoms of COVID-19 may appear in as few as two days or as long as 14 days after exposure.

About COVID-19...How it Spreads

According to CDC, the virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person contact, including:

- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about six feet).
- Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled through the lungs.

It may be possible that a person can contract COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has SARS-CoV-2 on it and then touching their own mouth, nose or possibly their eyes. But this is not believed to be the primary way the virus spreads. People are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic (e.g., experiencing fever, cough, sore throats and/or shortness of breath). Some spread may be possible before people show symptoms; there have been reports of this type of “asymptomatic” transmission with this new coronavirus. But neither is this thought to be the main way the virus is transmitted. CDC notes that even with the implementation of public health measures, such as social distancing, to limit the spread of the virus, it is likely that some person-to-person transmission will continue.

Steps Employers Can Take to Reduce Workers’ Risk of Exposure

- Develop an infectious-disease preparedness and response plan.
- Prepare to implement basic infection-prevention measures.
- Develop policies and procedures for prompt identification and isolation of sick people, if appropriate.
- Develop, implement and communicate about workplace flexibilities (e.g., telework or remote-work options) and protections.
- Implement workplace controls:
 - Administrative controls

- The NGFA is committed to promoting safety and health in the workplace and shares the Occupational Safety and Health Administration’s (OSHA’s) commitment to protecting employees.
- The NGFA’s extensive efforts to enhance safety include unprecedented research and education efforts launched in the early 1980s that helped lead to a dramatic reduction in the number of fire and explosion incidents in commercial grain-handling facilities.
- Each year, NGFA jointly sponsors regional safety seminars with affiliated state and regional grain and feed associations. The one-day conferences focus on keeping grain handling employees physically safe.

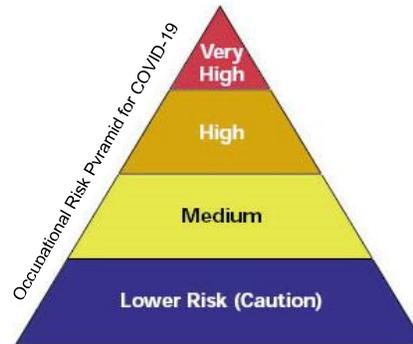
- Safe work practices, including social-distancing measures, as appropriate and feasible
- Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Engineering controls

For additional information on the above steps, see [OSHA's Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#) (pages 7-16) and the [World Health Organization](#).

Classifying Worker Exposure to SARS CoV-2

The Occupational Safety and Health Administrations classifies occupational risk for COVID-19 as follows:

- **Very High Exposure Risk:** High potential for exposure to known or suspected sources of COVID-19 during specific medical, postmortem or laboratory procedures.
- **High Exposure Risk:** High potential for exposure to known or suspected sources of COVID-19.
- **Medium Exposure Risk:** Jobs include those that require frequent and/or close contact with (i.e., within six feet of) people who may be infected with SARS-CoV-2, but who are not known or suspected COVID-19 patients. Workers in this risk group may have frequent contact with travelers who may return from international locations with widespread COVID-19 transmission. In areas where there is ongoing community transmission, workers in this category may have contact with the public (e.g., in schools, high-population-density work environments and some high-volume retail settings).
- **Low Exposure Risk (Caution):** Jobs that do not require contact with people known to be, or suspected of being, infected with SARS-CoV-2 nor frequent close contact with (i.e., within six feet of) the public. Workers in this category have minimal occupational contact with the public and other coworkers.



OSHA outlines the following protection measures for various levels of risk-exposure:

Protect Medium-Exposure Risk Workers By:

Engineering Controls

Install physical barriers, such as clear plastic sneeze guards, where feasible.

Administrative Controls

- Consider offering face masks to ill employees and customers to contain respiratory secretions until they are able leave the workplace (i.e., for medical evaluation/care or to return home). In the event of a shortage of masks, a reusable face shield that can be decontaminated may be an acceptable method of protecting against droplet transmission.
- Keep customers informed about symptoms of COVID-19 and direct that they minimize contact with facility employees, such as by posting signs about COVID-19 in areas of facilities where customers may visit (e.g., receiving pit/delivery scale) or including COVID-19 information in automated business communications.
- Where appropriate, limit customers' and the public's access to the worksite, or restrict access to only certain areas of the facility where their access is necessary for business reasons.
- Consider strategies to minimize face-to-face contact (e.g., drive-through windows, phone-based communication, telework).
- Communicate the availability of medical screening or other worker health resources (e.g., on-site nurse; telemedicine services).

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

When selecting PPE, consider factors such as function, fit, decontamination ability, disposal and cost. Sometimes, when PPE will have to be used repeatedly for a long period of time, a more expensive and durable type of PPE may be less expensive overall than disposable PPE. Each employer should select the combination of PPE that protects workers specific to their workplace conditions and operations. Workers with medium exposure risk may need to wear some combination of gloves, a gown, a face mask, and/or a face shield or goggles. PPE ensembles appropriate for workers in the medium exposure

NGFA Reference Corner

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

[CLICK HERE](#)

CDC COVID-19 Transmission Details

[CLICK HERE](#)

OSHA COVID-19 Webpage

[CLICK HERE](#)

OSHA General Duty Clause

[CLICK HERE](#)

OSHA-approved State Plans have standards, regulations and enforcement policies that are different from, but at least as effective as, OSHA's. Check with your **STATE PLAN**, as applicable, for more information.

Existing OSHA standards which offer frameworks that may help control some sources of the virus include:

[29 CFR 1910 Subpart I PPE](#)

[29 CFR 1910.134 Respiratory Protection](#)

[29 CFR 1910.1030 Blood Borne Pathogens](#)

Industry FAQs: Animal Food Safety and COVID-19

[CLICK HERE](#)



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risk category will vary by work task, the results of the employer's hazard assessment, and the types of exposures workers have on the job.

In addition, please refer to the following OSHA enforcement guidance documents for [Respiratory Protection and the N95 Shortage](#) and [Respiratory Equipment Certified Under Standards or Jurisdictions of Other Countries](#). The first document is designed to provide interim guidance to Compliance Safety and Health Officers for enforcing the Respiratory Protection standard (29 CFR § 1910.134) and certain other health standards, with regard to supply shortages of disposable N95 filtering facepiece respirators. The second document addresses N95s and other respirators that are certified under certain standards of other countries or jurisdictions; or when equipment certified under standards of other countries or jurisdictions is not available, previously certified under the standards of other countries or jurisdictions but are beyond their manufacturer's recommended shelf life (i.e., expired).

Protect Low-Exposure Risk (Caution) Workers By:

Engineering Controls

Additional engineering controls are not recommended for workers in the lower exposure risk group. Employers should ensure that engineering controls, if any, used to protect workers from other job hazards continue to function as intended.

Administrative Controls

- Monitor public health communications about COVID-19 recommendations and ensure that workers have access to that information. Frequently check the CDC COVID-19 website at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019>.
- Collaborate with workers to designate effective means of communicating important COVID-19 information.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Additional PPE currently is not recommended for workers in the lower exposure risk group. Workers should continue to use the PPE, if any, that they ordinarily would for other job tasks.

Summary of U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Guidance if a Worker in a Human or Animal Food Facility Tests Positive for COVID-19

1. Employers should inform other employees of possible exposure to the virus, while maintaining confidentiality of the affected worker.
2. Sick employees should follow CDC recommendations.
3. Food facilities should continue to operate, since they are a component of the U.S. critical infrastructure, as designated by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.
4. Employers should inform their local public health authority to become aware of and follow protocols that may have been established.
5. As appropriate, facilities should clean and disinfect work areas to minimize the potential for other workers to be exposed to the virus. A list of approved disinfectants has been developed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and is available [here](#).
6. It is not anticipated that food from the facility would need to be withdrawn or recalled, since there currently is no evidence of transmission of the disease by food or food packaging.

Updated: April 7, 2020 [New or updated information offset with asterisks (***)]

More safety
information at
www.ngfa.org

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