



NEWS RELEASE

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MDHHS Issues Order Requiring Testing of Agricultural and Food Processing Employees to Protect Health and Safety of Workers, Community

LANSING, MICH. Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) Director Robert Gordon has issued an [Emergency Order](#) requiring COVID-19 testing for agricultural and food processing employees. The order makes Michigan a national leader in COVID-19 safety protections for agricultural and migrant workers, building on Executive Orders from Gov. Gretchen Whitmer requiring workplace safety measures in meat and poultry processing plants and safe housing for COVID positive migrant workers.

“The men and women who work in our fields and food processing plants are at particular risk for COVID-19, and they need and deserve protection,” said Gordon. “Today’s order will help to reduce the spread of COVID in communities across Michigan and reduce the pandemic’s disparate impact on Latinos.”

In recent weeks, there have been 11 identified outbreaks in farms and food processing plants in Michigan. In addition, Latinos are 5 percent of Michigan’s population but represent 11 percent of COVID cases in which the individual’s ethnicity is identified.

The order requires migrant housing camp operators to provide COVID-19 testing as follows:

- One-time baseline testing of all residents ages 18 and over.
- Testing of all new residents with 48 hours of arrival, with separate housing for newly arriving residents for 14 days and a second test 10 – 14 days after arrival.
- Testing of any resident with symptoms or exposure.

Employers of migrant or seasonal workers, meat, poultry and egg processing facilities and greenhouses with over 20 employees on-site at a time to provide COVID-19 testing as follows:

- One-time baseline testing of all workers.
- Testing of all new workers prior to any in-person work.
- Testing of any worker with symptoms or exposure.

“The department will work with employers and housing operators to ensure timely reporting of testing data and access to PPE so that together we can prevent further viral spread,” Gordon said.

“Ensuring the health and safety of Michigan’s essential food and agriculture workers is paramount to keeping our food supply chain moving,” said Gary McDowell, director of the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. “These workers are our frontline staff who are a vital part of bringing our food from farm to plate.”

“It is critical that we keep our workers and their families across the food and agriculture industry safe and healthy,” said John Cakmakci, president of UFCW Local 951. “I applaud Directors Gordon and McDowell for their efforts to protect the people of Michigan and our economy.”

[On July 28, the American Farm Bureau Federation and 30 U.S. produce industry organizations urged Congress to provide additional resources to assist growers in protecting their workforce from COVID-19.](#)

In a letter to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, the organizations requested additional access and resources for farmers to allow testing for farmworkers, priority access to PPE supplies and access to vaccine and/or medicines once available.

“Vital to these efforts have been the hardworking, skilled men and women who grow, harvest and ship our food – the farmworkers,” the letter stated. “Collectively, we represent farmers who grow the majority of our nation’s fruits, vegetables and tree nuts. They place the highest priority on the health and safety of their employees, taking extraordinary measures to insulate their employees from the risks of exposure to COVID-19.”

Employers and housing operators must complete a plan by Aug. 10 for how they will conduct testing in compliance with this order. Completion of baseline testing and implementation of ongoing testing is required no later than Aug. 24.

Employers and housing operators have several options for completing the required testing, including contracting with a medical provider, occupational health provider or laboratory to arrange a testing program; requesting state assistance to conduct testing; or utilizing testing resources in the broader community. The state will provide testing support for employers or housing operators as its capacity allows and assist facilities in identifying other sources of testing capacity as needed.

MDHHS also released a [guidance document](#) for employers providing step-by-step information on how employers can complete testing and highlighting resources like grant funding and insurance coverage through Medicaid that can provide financial support for testing.

COVID positive and exposed residents would be required to isolate or quarantine until meeting the return-to-work criteria from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. MDHHS will be partnering with Community Action Agencies in impacted communities in order to provide food, housing, and economic support for workers who lose income due to testing.

Failure to comply with this order may result in the issuance of a civil monetary penalty under the authority of MCL 333.2262.

Information around this outbreak is changing rapidly. The latest information is available at Michigan.gov/Coronavirus and CDC.gov/Coronavirus.

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