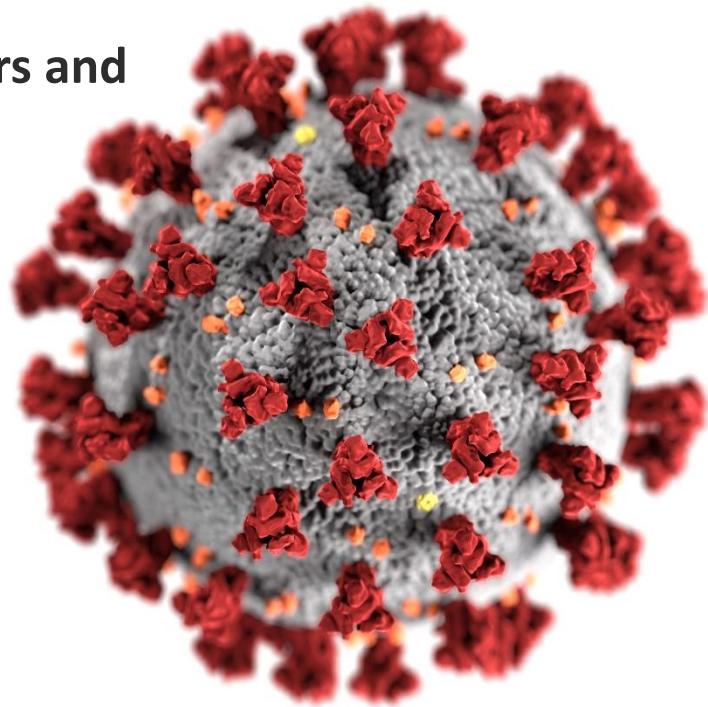# Virtual Occupational Technical Assistance (VOTA)

Review of "Meat and Poultry Processing Workers and Employers - Interim Guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)"

cdc.gov/coronavirus

Presentation overview

- **SARS-CoV-2 Exposure Risk**
- **COVID-19 Assessment and Control Plan**
  - Engineering Controls
  - Administrative Controls
  - Personal Protective Equipment
  - Education and Training
  - Cleaning and Disinfection
- **Managing Workforce**
  - Screening and Monitoring Workers
  - Managing Sick Workers
  - Return to Work
  - Workers' Rights

Disclaimer

- The information covered in these slides is not exhaustive, and it is meant to convey the critical information meat and poultry processing facilities should use when developing plans for continuing operations in the setting of COVID-19 occurring among workers, or in the surrounding community

- For full guidance and information, please consult the Interim Guidance from CDC and OSHA on Meat and Poultry Processing Workers and Employees https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/meat-poultry-processing-workers-employers.html

- The information in this presentation is current as of May 16, 2020

Background on Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

- Respiratory illness caused by exposure to SARS-CoV-2 virus
- Symptoms
  - Cough
  - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
  - Fever
  - Chills
  - Muscle pain
  - Sore throat
  - New loss of taste or smell
- Range of severity
- Other less common symptoms have been reported (e.g., gastrointestinal symptoms like nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea)

Background on Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

- Transmission
  - Mainly person to person through respiratory droplets from an infected person when they cough, sneeze, or talk
  - Between people in close contact (within about 6 feet apart) for prolonged periods*
  - Possibly by touching contaminated surface or objects then touching mouth, nose, and possibly eyes
  - Current information about the asymptomatic spread supports the need for social distancing and other protective measures

- Risk factors for severe disease
  - Older adults (≥65 years old); Chronic medical conditions

*Data are insufficient to precisely define the duration of time that constitutes a prolonged exposure. Recommendations vary on the length of time of exposure, but 15 min of close exposure can be used as an operational definition.

Exposure risk among meat and poultry processing workers

- Duration of contact
  - Prolonged closeness to coworkers
  - Workers often work 10-12 hours per shift

- Distance between workers
  - Working close together (<6 feet) on the processing line
  - Shared spaces such as break rooms, locker rooms, and entrances/exits
  - Shared transportation to/from work
  - Frequent contact in community settings

Exposure risk among meat and poultry processing workers

- Type of contact
  - Inhalation of respiratory droplets in the air – for example, when workers in the plant who have the virus cough or sneeze (main)
  - Contact with contaminated surfaces or objects, such as tools, workstations, or break room tables

Create a COVID-19 Assessment and Control Plan

- Qualified Workplace Coordinator (likely EH&S officer)
  - Responsible for creating a COVID-19 assessment and control planning
  - Coordinates with state/local public health and OSH professionals
 - Knowledgeable of public health guidelines and federal regulations

Create a COVID-19 Assessment and Control Plan

- Workplace Assessment
  - Conduct initial hazard and risk assessment following the exposure risk factors and exposure routes
  - Conduct periodic (e.g., weekly, monthly, quarterly) hazard assessments to identify risks and prevention strategies
  - Consider the role of COVID-19 testing and contact tracing of positive workers

Create a COVID-19 Assessment and Control Plan: Identify Controls
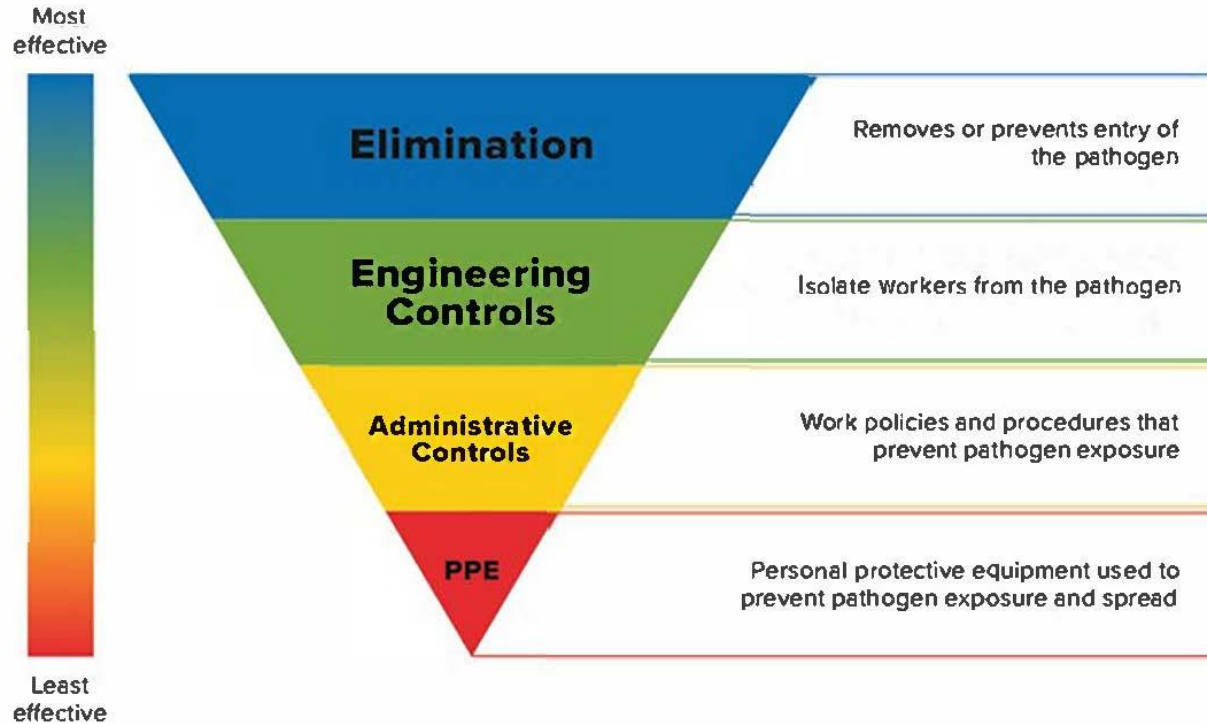
Example Engineering Controls

- Modify workstation to maintain 6 feet separation among workers in all directions

- Use markings and signs as reminders to maintain location and practice social distancing (staying 6 feet or more apart)
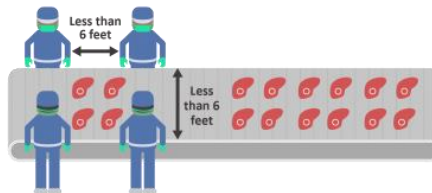
Example Engineering Controls

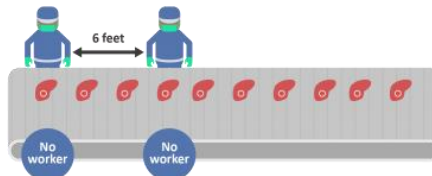**How to Align Meatpacking and Meat Processing Workstations, If Feasible**

Bad:
Workers are within six feet of one another, including at side-by-side or facing workstations.
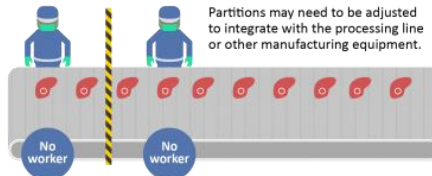
Less than 6 feet

Less than 6 feet

Good:
Workers are spaced at least six feet apart, not facing one another. Other configurations may be used to achieve similar distancing between workers.

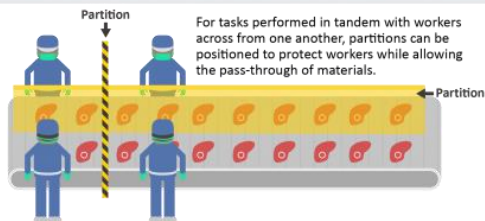6 feet

No worker

No worker

Good:
Physical barriers, such as partitions, separate workers from each other.

Partitions may need to be adjusted to integrate with the processing line or other manufacturing equipment.

No worker

No worker

Good:
Physical barriers, such as partitions, separate workers from each other, including where workers need to perform tasks in tandem across from one another.

Partition

For tasks performed in tandem with workers across from one another, partitions can be positioned to protect workers while allowing the pass-through of materials.

Partition

Example Engineering Controls

- Use physical barriers between workers such as strip curtains, plexiglass, etc.

- Provide adequate ventilation in work areas; consult with a qualified heating, ventilation, and air conditioning engineer

- Remove personal cooling fans and take steps to minimize air from other fans from blowing from one worker to another; take alternate steps to prevent heat hazards associated with the removal of fans

Example Engineering Controls

- Install ample handwashing stations or (touch-free) hand sanitizers (≥60% alcohol)

- Add additional clock in/out stations, or stagger times for workers to clock in/out and other touch-free methods to reduce crowding

- Increase worker separation by removing or rearranging chairs and tables in break rooms and other common areas
  - Identify other areas such as training or conference rooms
  - Use outside tents for break and lunch areas

Example Administrative Controls to Promote Social Distancing

- Encourage single-file movement with workers separated by six feet
- Designate workers to facilitate social distancing on floor lines
- Provide floor markings and signs (visual cues)
- Stagger break times, arrival/departure times to minimize groups in parking areas, locker rooms, or around time clocks
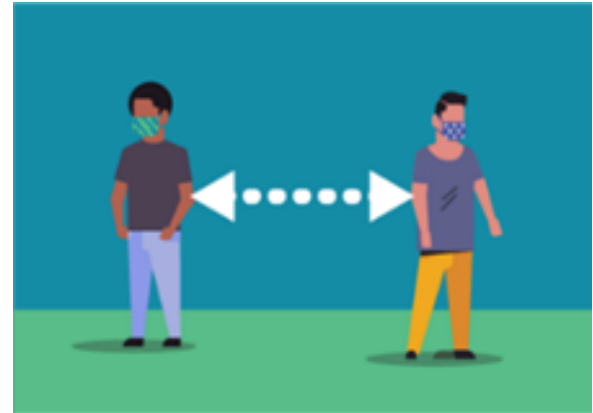
Example Administrative Controls to Promote Social Distancing

- Encourage workers to avoid carpooling to and from work, if possible;

- If carpooling, practice social distancing, hand hygiene, mask use, disinfection

- Modify process or production lines, shifts schedules, and stagger shifts
  - Add shifts (1 shift may turn into 2 or 3 split shifts)
 - Reserve one shift for cleaning

Example Administrative Controls

- Monitor and respond to absenteeism; implement plans to continue business

- Review leave and incentive policies to ensure
  - Ill workers are not in the workplace
  - Employees are aware of and understand policies
  - Employees are not penalized for taking sick leave if they have COVID-19
  - They are flexible (e.g., give advances on future sick leave, or allow for donating sick leave to others)

Example Administrative Controls

- Consider cohorting (grouping) workers
  - Increases effectiveness of shift schedules
  - Minimizes number of different individuals in close contact
  - May reduce the number of workers exposed if a worker is sick

- Establish reporting system for sharing worker health and COVID-19 contact status with supervisor while maintaining confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

- Educate workers to avoid touching their face (eyes, nose, mouth) with unwashed hands or after removing PPE
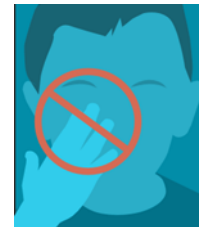
Example Administrative Controls

- Provide workers access to soap, safe running water, and single use paper towels for handwashing
  - Alcohol-based hand sanitizers (minimum 60% alcohol) if soap/water not immediately available
  - Multiple locations and touch-free

- Workplace programs to promote personal hygiene
  - Additional breaks and additional time to increase hand washing or hand sanitizer use
  - Tissues and touch-free trash receptacles
  - Educate on avoiding tobacco products

Examples of personal protective equipment (PPE)

- Conduct hazard assessment to determine the need for PPE

- Follow OSHA PPE standard (29 CFR Subpart I)

- Use videos or in-person visual demonstrations of how to properly put on and take off PPE; maintain social distancing during these demonstrations

Examples of personal protective equipment (PPE)

- Emphasize that care must be taken when putting on and taking off PPE to ensure that the worker does not become contaminated

- Provide PPE that is either disposable (preferred) or, if reusable, ensure it is properly disinfected and stored in a clean location when not in use

- PPE worn at the facility should not be taken home or shared

Examples of personal protective equipment (PPE)

- Face shields may serve as both PPE and source control
  - Face shields can provide additional protection from both potential process-related splashes and potential person-to-person droplet spread

- Face shields can help minimize contamination of masks and cloth face coverings
  - Clean and decontaminate after each shift, and when not in use they should be kept in a clean location at the work facility
  - Face shields should also wrap around the sides of the wearer's face and extend to below the chin

Examples of personal protective equipment (PPE)

- Stress hand hygiene before and after handling all PPE

- Always consider whether PPE is necessary to protect workers
  - When engineering and administrative controls are difficult to maintain and there may be exposure to other workplace hazards, such as splashes or sprays of liquids on processing lines or disinfectants used for facility cleaning

Examples of personal protective equipment (PPE)

- Consider voluntary use of filtering facepiece respirators (such as an N95, if available) for their workers during COVID-19 outbreak

- PPE such as gloves, face and eye protection, and other types of PPE may be needed when cleaning and disinfecting

- Consider additional hazards created by poorly fitting PPE with respect to the work environment (e.g., machinery in which PPE could get caught)

Cloth face coverings

- A cloth face covering may reduce the amount of large respiratory droplets that a person spreads when talking, sneezing, or coughing; cloth face coverings are intended to protect other people—not the wearer.

- Protective measure in addition to social distancing; especially important when social distancing not possible or feasible

- Not PPE and not a replacement for respiratory protection when respirators are needed

Cloth face covering considerations

Employers who determine that cloth face coverings should be worn in the workplace, should ensure the cloth face coverings

- Fit over nose and mouth and fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face
- Are secured with ties or ear loops and include multiple layers of fabric
- Allow for breathing without restriction
- Are not used if they become wet or contaminated; and are replaced with clean replacements, provided by employer, as needed
- Are handled as little as possible
- Can be laundered daily after the shift, without damage or change to shape (a clean cloth face covering should be used each day)

Educate and train workers and supervisors

- Material should be easily understood, in preferred language, at appropriate literacy level, and contain accurate and timely information
  - Recognizing COVID-19 symptoms, spread, risk at work and ways to prevent exposure to the virus
  - Proper hand washing and hand sanitizer use
  - Cough and sneeze etiquette
  - Infection control measures

Educate and train workers and supervisors

- Place posters at building entrance, break and common areas, locker rooms on COVID-19 recognition and prevention
- Posters should be legible at a distance and in common languages in the worker population

Cleaning and disinfection

- Clean and disinfect tools regularly; as often as workers change workstations or move to new tools

- Use EPA-registered disinfectants that are effective against SARS-CoV-2; List N: Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2

- Work with USDA staff to ensure compliance with food safety standards

Cleaning and disinfection

- Establish protocols and provide supplies to disinfect tools, equipment and frequently-touched surfaces in workspaces and common areas (e.g., door handles, handrails and barriers, bathroom faucets and surfaces) at least once per shift

- Cleaning and disinfection workers may require additional PPE and other controls (to comply with applicable OSHA regulations) to protect against chemical hazards.

- Ensure hazard communication program and training in place

Screening and monitoring workers

- Policies and procedures for screening workers should be developed in consultation with state and local health officials and occupational medicine professionals.

- Options to screen workers include:
  - Screen prior to entry into the facility
  - Provide verbal screening in appropriate language(s) to determine whether workers have had a fever, felt feverish, or had chills, coughing, or difficulty breathing in the past 24 hours
  - Check temperatures of workers at the start of each shift to identify anyone with a fever of 100.4°F or greater

Managing Sick Workers

- Do not let employees enter the workplace if screening results indicate that the worker is suspected of having COVID-19.

- Encourage workers to self-isolate and contact a healthcare provider

- Provide information on the facility's return-to-work policies and procedures

- Inform human resources, employer health unit (if in place), and supervisor (so worker can be moved off schedule during illness and a replacement can be assigned, if needed).

Protect Personnel performing screening activities

- Use engineering controls like barriers, dividers, or rope and stanchion system to maintain at least six feet of distance between screeners and workers being screened.

- If screeners need to be within six feet of workers, provide screeners with appropriate PPE
  - May include gloves, a gown, face shield, and at minimum, a face mask
  - N95 filtering facepiece or more protective filtering facepiece respirators may be appropriate if employee has signs or symptoms of COVID-19

Managing sick workers

- Workers with symptoms on arrival or who become sick during the day should be separated from others at work and sent home

- Disinfect the workstation and tools of the symptomatic/sick worker

- If a worker is confirmed to have COVID-19:
  - Inform all their work contacts of possible exposure while maintaining confidentiality by Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
  - Provide guidance to fellow workers on how to proceed based on CDC Public Health Recommendations for Community-Related Exposure

Managing sick workers

- Work with state, local, tribal and/or territorial health officials to help identify identification of other exposed and potentially exposed individuals, like coworkers

- On-site healthcare personnel should follow appropriate CDC and OSHA guidance for healthcare and emergency response personnel

- Maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Return to work – Critical infrastructure employers

- Reintegration (bringing back) of exposed, asymptomatic workers to onsite operations should follow the [CDC Critical Infrastructure Guidance](#).

    - Employers may permit workers who have been exposed to COVID-19, but remain without symptoms, to continue to work, provided they adhere to additional safety precautions.

    - Consultation with an occupational health provider and state and local health officials will help employers develop the most appropriate plan consistent with CDC guidance.

Return to work – Critical infrastructure employers

- Reintegration of workers with COVID-19 (COVID-19 positive), including those workers who have remained asymptomatic, to onsite operations should follow the CDC Interim Guidance, [Discontinuation of Isolation for Persons with COVID-19 Not in Healthcare Settings](#)

Workers' Rights

- OSH Act prohibits retaliating against workers for raising concerns about safety and health conditions

- Whistleblower protection program enforces many federal laws to protect workers from retaliation for raising or reporting concerns

Workers' Rights

- OSHA encourages employees to submit complaints to OSHA within legal time limit; there are multiple ways employee can file a complaint with OSHA

- OSHA provides recommendations to assist employers on how to respond to worker complaints about workplace hazards, and create workplaces that are free of retaliation

Information resources

- Meat and Poultry Processing Workers and Employers: Interim Guidance from CDC and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/meat-poultry-processing-workers-employers.html

- Implementing Safety Practices for Critical Infrastructure Workers Who May Have Had Exposure to a Person with Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19 https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/critical-workers/implementing-safety-practices.html
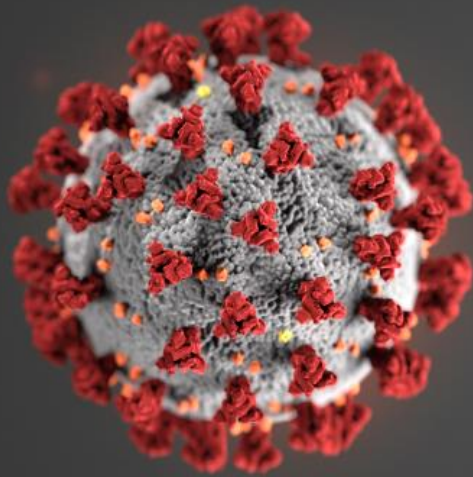
For more information, contact CDC
1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)
TTY: 1-888-232-6348   www.cdc.gov

The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.