

Farming operations hiring contract workers

What employers need to know when hiring contract workers during COVID-19

As an employer of farm labour, you are responsible and liable for all workers in your workplace - those you hire directly and those you hire through a temporary help agency (THA).

Introducing workers from a variety of labour sources during the COVID-19 pandemic brings heightened risks of COVID-19 transmission. Using an illegitimate temporary help agency could leave you responsible for thousands of dollars in unpaid wages. Most important is the health and safety of all those who are working for you.

You invest in crop protection and insurance, it's equally important to invest in your workers – know, train and protect them.

Here's what you need to know to protect your workforce, farm and future.

5 Things to consider when hiring a contract worker...

1. Know your contract workers

- Find out what they know about farming and where they have been.
- Learn about the agency you are working with and how they recruit workers.
- Make sure that contract workers have the appropriate paperwork. Keep in mind that those with SIN cards starting with 9 will also need a valid work permit.
- Document the names and contact information of every contract worker. This is especially important for contact tracing in the event of an outbreak to quickly protect other workers.

2. Make sure the temporary help agency is registered with WSIB

- Ask for a copy of the temporary help agency's WSIB Certificate.

3. Know your temporary help agency

- Know where the temporary help agencies secure their contract workers.
- Know the training the temporary help agencies provide for their contract workers.
 - o Relevant topics include health and safety awareness, working on farms and relevant hazards and working safely during COVID-19.

- Be mindful of cash payments.
 - If the temporary help agency asks for their fees to be paid in cash, ensure that payments are well documented and easy to reconcile.
- Request the temporary help agency to sign off that all contract workers have the appropriate paperwork.

4. Health and Safety

Employer duties under the [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#) apply to both the host employer and the temporary help agency providing the contract worker. Both are jointly responsible for taking every precaution reasonable in the circumstances to protect the worker.

- **Keep temporary help agency workers informed**
 - Employers must train all workers, including contract workers, on how to avoid the risk of COVID-19 transmission in their workplace.
- **Screen**
 - Farms should immediately implement active screening for COVID-19 for anyone entering the farm.
 - Anyone showing symptoms of COVID-19 should not be allowed to enter the farm and should be advised to go home immediately, self-isolate and notify the temporary help agency.
- **Create work pods or cohorts**
 - Consider grouping workers together in cohorts, groups, teams or work pods to avoid interactions to limit the potential spread of COVID-19.

5. Responsibility

Both the temporary help agency and farm employer have responsibility for:

- [Employment Standards](#)
- [Occupational Health and Safety](#)
- [Workplace Safety and Insurance](#)

For more information, please visit [resources to prevent COVID-19 in the workplace](#) and [using temporary help in agriculture](#).

General inquiries about workplace health and safety or reporting health and safety incident call 1-877-202-0008.