



Yakima Health District

Media Release

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Yakima Health District launches On-Site COVID-19 Technical Assistance Team

Yakima, WA—The Yakima Health District has launched a team to provide on-site technical assistance to businesses seeking assistance with COVID-19. The Yakima Health District has partnered with the Yakima County Development Association, the Grower’s League, Washington Tree Fruit Association, and the Department of Labor & Industries to staff this team. This team was developed in response to an increase in reported cases of COVID-19 by employers. The on-site technical assistance will include at least one Yakima Health District staff member and one partner agency to go in-person to these facilities.

“After reviewing the data, we knew that we had to take a partnered approach to help assist these essential businesses keep their employees safe during COVID-19. We know that our essential workers are at a higher risk of infection of COVID-19 because they cannot always ‘Stay At Home’. Being able to go into these businesses with our partners demonstrates a united effort to ensure the safety of the community and the continuity of critical infrastructure operations.” said Andre Fresco, Executive Director of the Yakima Health District.

While on site, the team observes infection prevention measures in facility workflows. After the on-site visit, the Yakima Health District provides recommendations for improvement in employee screening processes, increased physical spacing and the addition of physical barriers, as well as employee education. The on-site technical assistance team has focused on the agriculture and food production industry as data analysis shows that at least 240 individuals who work in the agriculture and food production industry have tested positive for COVID-19.

Additional work is taking place to prepare for the arrival of potentially several thousand temporary agriculture workers. The Yakima Health District has worked with the Washington State Department of Health to ensure that proper guidelines are in place. In addition, the Yakima Health District is actively working with local providers to ensure testing capacity should a case appear in a temporary housing facility. Guidelines for testing and containment will be similar to those that are in place in long-term care facilities.

“Temporary housing facilities are particularly vulnerable to the spread of infections because the individuals who live in them, sleep, eat and work in the same location. That type of ‘congregate living’ environment is more conducive to the spread of infection than other settings, and as such we take extra precautions to prevent outbreaks and keep workers safe.” said Dr. Teresa Everson, Health Officer at the Yakima Health District.

If any businesses need help with COVID-19 public health recommendations, they should call the Environmental Health line at (509) 249-6514. Priority will be given to organizations that have multiple cases of COVID-19 in their facilities. Businesses can also call their local L&I DOSH Consultant at 1-800-547-8367. The Yakima County Development Organization has created a page of COVID-19 resources for local businesses that can be found [here](#).

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