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News

July 8, 2020

Southwestern Public Health MOH Issues Class Order to Protect Farm Workers from COVID-19 Infection

Order outlines 22 measures that must be followed by agricultural farms.

Today, Dr. Joyce Lock, Medical Officer of Health for Southwestern Public Health, issued a Class Order under Section 22 of [Ontario's Health Protection and Promotion Act](#). The Order is intended to reduce the high risk of COVID-19 spread within agricultural farms in Elgin County, Oxford County, and the City of St. Thomas.

“Based on the number of large COVID-19 outbreaks in agricultural farms in similar regions across Ontario, this is a targeted, proactive measure intended to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and ensure the health of these workers,” says Lock.

The Order, which can be found on the Health Unit’s website, lists 22 measures that agricultural employers must follow if they employ migrant farm workers, Temporary Foreign Workers, local workers, or workers from temporary help agencies. The measures include everything from physical distancing practices, guidelines for accommodations, screening practices, and keeping accurate and updated contact information.

To date, Southwestern Public Health has had one agricultural outbreak involving two residents and twenty Temporary Foreign Workers who have all since recovered. However, as COVID-19 spreads quickly, the Order is necessary to further protect farm workers from COVID-19.

“This is about local economics and Ontario’s food supply chain, of course. But most importantly, it is about protecting people who live and work together on area farms who want to return home to their lives and families after the agricultural season wraps up in the fall,” adds Lock.

Operators of agricultural farms are required to follow the requirements under this Order, and those who do not do so can be charged and fined up to \$5,000 per day for every day or part of each day on which the offence occurs or continues. The Order is in place until further notice.

About Southwestern Public Health

Southwestern Public Health works with its partners to ensure the health of the whole community. Our programs respond to public health emergencies; promote healthy lifestyles; help prevent injuries, illness and disease in the community; and promote positive change and social conditions that improve health. Southwestern Public Health delivers mandated programs under the [Ontario Public Health Standards](#) and is regulated by the [Ontario Health Promotion and Protection Act](#). The health unit maintains primary locations in Woodstock and St. Thomas. For more information, visit www.swpublichealth.ca.

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