

# Guidance for Temporary Foreign Workers employed in the Agriculture and Seafood Sectors

In recognition of their vital importance to the Canadian economy, on March 20, 2020, the Federal Government [announced](#) that temporary foreign workers (TFW) would be granted an exemption from previous travel restrictions including air travel and border crossing. This exemption came into effect on March 26, 2020.

In Nova Scotia, approximately 2000 TFW contribute to the planting and harvesting of crops and the processing of our agriculture and seafood products.

The Federal Government has published a [joint letter](#) from their Ministers of Health and Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, outlining the Government of Canada's expectations for employers bringing TFW into the country. Federal [Guidelines](#) have also been established and Questions and Answers are also [available](#).

This guidance document provides fundamental information related to the Federal and Provincial requirements of employing TFW but is not intended to replace medical or legal advice.

Updated information on COVID-19 and Public Health Directives can be found on the [Nova Scotia Government website](#).

## UNDERSTANDING THE WORK ENVIRONMENT

The Federal Government has prepared a [guide](#) for helping workplaces and businesses evaluate any unique risks involved in their operations.

The Nova Scotia Government also has a [factsheet](#) for businesses and other groups.

## TRAVEL TO CANADA AND NOVA SCOTIA

TFW are now allowed to enter Canada by land or air, however, appropriate arrangements must be made before travel begins.

Like all travelers, TFW will be screened prior to boarding an international flight Canada, with any individuals showing symptoms not allowed to travel.

Upon entering Canada, TFW will also be screened for COVID-19 symptoms. If they meet all travel requirements and are symptom free, workers will be allowed to travel to their final destination where they must [self-isolate](#) for 14 days. This facility may be an interim location, or the usual housing arranged for the workers provided it meets all provincial and federal requirements (see Self-Isolation section below).

In addition to commercial flights, charter planes for TFWs are allowed to land in Halifax.

Upon arrival in the Halifax Stanfield International Airport, TFW will be met and provided a boxed lunch once they are cleared through security.

Transportation between the Airport and the self-isolation locations will be provided through one of three methods:

1. Employer, or their representative, can pick up TFW at the Airport:
  - 1.1. Social distancing of two metres between the driver and the workers will be maintained at all times.
  - 1.2. TFW will:
    - 1.2.1.1. be met at the “luggage” pick-up by their employer/representative
    - 1.2.1.2. be permitted to go to the washroom to wash their hands
    - 1.2.1.3. be directed to the vehicle
    - 1.2.1.4. put their own luggage in the vehicle
    - 1.2.1.5. sit in the back seat(s) of the vehicle
    - 1.2.1.6. be driven directly to the isolation site
    - 1.2.1.7. exit the vehicle and collect their luggage
    - 1.2.1.8. be guided directly to their isolation site
  - 1.3. Vehicles will be cleaned and disinfected upon arrival at self-isolation facility.
2. Employer can provide vehicle(s) at Airport for TFW to drive themselves to isolation site:
  - 2.1. Social distancing of two metres between the driver and the workers will be maintained at all times.

2.2. TFW will:

- 2.2.1.1. be met at the “luggage” pick-up by their employer/representative
- 2.2.1.2. be permitted to go to the washroom to wash their hands
- 2.2.1.3. be directed to the vehicle
- 2.2.1.4. put their own luggage in the vehicle
- 2.2.1.5. drive directly to the isolation site. The employer/representative will follow the worker vehicle to ensure they drive directly to the isolation site
- 2.2.1.6. exit the vehicle and collect their luggage
- 2.2.1.7. be guided directly to their isolation site

2.3. Vehicles will be cleaned and disinfected upon arrival at self-isolation facility.

3. Employers can coordinate and utilize third-party transportation for TFW:

3.1. Social distancing of two metres between the driver and the workers will be maintained at all times.

3.2. TFW will:

- 3.2.1.1. be met at the “luggage” pick-up by the representative
- 3.2.1.2. be permitted to go to the washroom to wash their hands
- 3.2.1.3. be directed to the bus
- 3.2.1.4. put their own luggage in the bus. Buses usually have capacity for 56 passengers but will leave every other seat empty and only transport a maximum of 28 passengers
- 3.2.1.5. be driven to the isolation facility, either to a centralized location or employer facility
- 3.2.1.6. exit the vehicle and collect their luggage
- 3.2.1.7. be guided directly to their isolation site

## EMPLOYEE EDUCATION

Upon arrival at their self-isolation location, all TFW must be provided COVID-19 information and best practices training. Regular reminder sessions for TFW are recommended to provide updated information and reinforce best practices.

Training must include protocols for safety measures, hygiene and physical distancing as well as health monitoring and reporting illness.

Training and education should be available in both English and the language best suited for the employees. The Public Health Agency of Canada has some materials available in several languages. They can be reached at 1-833-784-4397 or [phac.covi19.aspc@canada.ca](mailto:phac.covi19.aspc@canada.ca).

Information on [proper hand washing](#) and [COVID-19 symptoms](#) should be posted in both work and living facilities.

## HYGIENE AND CLEANING REQUIREMENTS

Good hygiene and other directives can help [prevent COVID-19](#) transmission.

Employers must establish cleaning protocols for during the TFW self-isolation period and regular work terms.

Hand washing must be encouraged, particularly before and after preparing or eating food and after handling garbage, dirty laundry or bathroom use.

Employers are required to ensure suitable hand washing facilities or hand sanitizer with a minimum of 60% alcohol is available for workers at all times.

All common areas and surfaces are required to be cleaned twice daily. Examples include washrooms, vehicles, tables, light switches, and door handles.

Regular household cleaners, disinfectant wipes or diluted bleach solution can be used according to the label directions. A list of [hard-surface disinfectants](#) can be found on the Federal Government website.

## SELF-ISOLATION PERIOD

TFW are required to self-isolate for 14 days following their arrival. They are not allowed to work during this period.

Nova Scotia's public health directives including [social distancing](#) and social gatherings of no more than 5 people must be followed at all times during the self-isolation period.

Employers are required to ensure TFW have all the necessary supplies required to self-isolate including appropriate housing, food, cleaning and personal supplies.

Employers must perform regular check-ins to ensure that workers do not leave the isolation site at any time.

Isolation can occur in housing provided by the employer at or near their work location or in centralized isolation facilities which has been contracted to provide this service.

1. Employer owner/leased facilities (e.g. on-farm housing, apartments)
  - 1.1. All farms hiring TFW through the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program and Agricultural Stream are required to have a housing inspection completed prior to the arrival of their workers. These facilities are designed to ensure adequate space, kitchen facilities and common areas for workers. The Housing Inspection Report is required by Employment and Social Development Canada.
  - 1.2. These isolation sites will be considered house-hold units under the Order of the Medical Officer.
  - 1.3. All employers must complete the pre-screening checklist attached as Appendix A to self-assess their ability to ensure self-isolation requirements can be met in their facilities.
  - 1.4. Shared sleeping facilities are permitted assuming that social distancing requirements are followed. Beds must be a minimum two metres apart.
  - 1.5. Shared facilities (e.g. bathroom, kitchen, living space) are allowed, provided there is sufficient space in the accommodations for TFW to respect the self-isolation requirements.
  - 1.6. Common areas and kitchen facilities must have adequate space to allow for proper social distancing within the isolation sites.
  - 1.7. Employers must ensure that cleaning logs are maintained by the TFW in each unit to record cleaning routines.

- 1.8. Employers must put into place systems to ensure TFW are able to access food and personal supplies without leaving the accommodations (e.g. there are telephones or internet available)..
  - 1.8.1.1. Employers will ensure there are groceries in the house upon arrival.
  - 1.8.1.2. Employers will do any required shopping for workers, delivering groceries to the door and leaving them on the step for the workers to take in the house.
  - 1.8.1.3. TFW will prepare their own meals.
  - 1.8.1.4. If the employers provide meals to the workers, the meals will be delivered to the workers door and left for the workers to collect.
2. Centralized isolation facilities (e.g. convention centre, hotel)
  - 2.1. Facilities have been notified that TFW are self-isolating and will have security do regular walk throughs to ensure that guests are maintaining social distancing and not gathering in any common areas or rooms.
  - 2.2. Employers must have representatives on site at the facility to respond to workers needs and to ensure that TFW are abiding by self- isolation protocols.
  - 2.3. Rooms must be single occupancy.
  - 2.4. If facilities that have shared washrooms, cleaning materials would be left in the washrooms and TFW would be responsible for cleaning and disinfecting after use.
  - 2.5. Facility staff will provide hand soap/linens in the guest rooms but will not be providing daily cleaning of the rooms. Linen changes will be arranged through a drop off at the door with towels and sheets changed once per week or more often if requested.
  - 2.6. Cleaning supplies will be delivered to individual rooms as needed.
  - 2.7. Meals will be delivered by facility or outside catering company.
    - 2.7.1.1. Meals will be delivered at the door of each room.
    - 2.7.1.2. Dirty dishes, garbage will be picked up in the hallways outside the room.
    - 2.7.1.3. Facility staff will have minimal contact with the guests during their 14 day isolation period.

2.7.1.4. Meal delivery times would be set, and TFW would need to be in their rooms to minimize any contact with staff.

2.7.1.5. Disposable utensils and dinnerware would be used.

Pictures of either accommodations should be taken, and date stamped for the employer's records.

Employers must ensure that the health of TFW are monitored daily during this time (see Monitoring section below).

The 14 days of self-isolation are included in the TFW period of employment. That means that the employer must comply with requirements of the employer-employee relationship during that time. More information is available on the [TFW Program](#) page of the Employment and Social Development Canada website.

## MONITORING

Employers are responsible for instructing TFW to self-monitor at least daily for fever (or feeling feverish), new or worsening cough, headache, sore throat or runny nose.

More [information](#) is available on Nova Scotia's website, including an [on-line self-assessment tool](#).

The employer must ensure that employees are regularly monitored for symptoms during the self-isolation period. This monitoring must take place on a daily basis and a record of the results must be maintained.

If monitoring sessions are conducted in person, social distancing must be maintained.

Personal privacy of workers should be protected in gathering information.

Any individuals who are experiencing two or more of the above symptoms must immediately self-isolate and complete the [on-line self-assessment tool](#) (see If Illness Develops section below).

## WORK PLACE PROTOCOLS

After the self-isolation period, employers are responsible to ensure protocols are in place and followed by TFW for both living accommodations and work activities.

The Federal Guidelines state that TFW should continue to follow social distancing requirements in their living accommodations as much as possible after the isolation period.

Reminders of good hygiene practices, including hand washing, must be posted in living and work locations.

TFW must be instructed to continue to self-monitor for symptoms such as fever, cough or difficulty breathing and report any such symptoms immediately.

Cleaning routines must be established including the disinfecting of common spaces and high touch areas, including work vehicles and equipment.

Employers must ensure the TFW have access to individual personal items and, as much as possible, their own tools for work. When not possible, proper hand washing and disinfection practices must be followed.

The food sector is deemed essential services and are thereby exempted from Nova Scotia's social distancing and gathering requirements at work locations.

However, employers must minimize work situations that require distancing of less than 2 metres. Work hours, including breaks, should be staggered where possible to discourage workers from congregating.

Like all Nova Scotia residents, employers and TFW, are required to follow public health directives, including social distancing requirements and social gathering restrictions when not working on-shift.

## IF ILLNESS DEVELOPS

If any worker becomes unwell, the employer must arrange for that worker to be fully isolated from all others and complete the [on-line self-assessment tool](#). Further directions will be provided at the completion of the tool. If the on-line assessment tool cannot be accessed, then assessment can be obtained by calling 811.

The Employer must have a plan to safely (ill employee should wear a mask and sit in a row of seats different than the driver) transport an ill employee to an assessment centre if this is directed by 811.

The Employer must ensure all public health directives are followed for all employees.

Employers are responsible for ensuring employees are provided with necessary supplies for isolating when sick and the daily monitoring of the employee occurs.

The employer should also call the local consulate of the employee.

## **OTHER INFORMATION**

Information and resources on COVID-19 are available from the [Nova Scotia Government](#) and the [Government of Canada](#).

Employers and employees are responsible to be aware of [alerts and notices](#), including [orders](#) by the Medical Officer of Health.