

# COMMUNICATIONS PLAN FOR WINERIES AND VINEYARDS IN PREPARATION OF A COVID-19 OUTBREAK

AUGUST 18, 2020 revised August 25, 2020

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# COMMUNICATIONS

## PURPOSE

- To establish communications protocol among wineries when or if the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA), Oregon Occupational Safety and Health Administration (Oregon OSHA), and Oregon Health Authority (OHA) report one or more cases of COVID-19 in a winery or vineyard.
- A coordinated response will ensure that facilities can continue to operate and protect the public's health, while also having tools to communicate with employees, the media and their customers, club members and partners.



# FIVE TENETS OF COMMUNICATION

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), there are 5 main tenets of communication to follow in preparing for and enduring an outbreak:

- 1. Trust**
- 2. Announcing early**
- 3. Transparency**
- 4. Listening**
- 5. Planning**

# EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION

Use this OHA template for communications to employees, available as a link from OHA (le2294, Contact Letter):

<https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/Preparedness/Partners/Pages/riskcommunicationtools.aspx>



# MEDIA RELATIONS

1. Before an outbreak occurs, designate a person at the winery to speak to media.
2. When workplace outbreaks reach 20 or more cases, the outbreak is named in the next day's daily press release.
3. You may not release the name of the COVID affected person to the media.

Additionally:

- From Meagan McLafferty, epidemiologist at OHA: You are welcome to release the number of cases at a winery or vineyard. As a caveat, the figure OHA reports include all individuals associated with an outbreak which may include non-employees such as household members.
- Also, if a writer asks whether a COVID-19 impacted worker touching the product (wine bottle, packaging) can infect the customer, the answer is no, through the time and process of handling the infection on the surface area is diminished, and this is not a meaningful amount of transmission of disease for the consumer to be concerned about.

# MEDIA RELATIONS

## **Develop Talking Points for press**

In your own words, talking points should be positive and proactive and should include action steps your winery is taking. These include:

- a. Rapid communication with staff and quick response and reporting times that your company has taken in trying to stop the spread of COVID-19 in removing the infected person from the workplace.
- b. Measures you have in place to stop the spread of COVID, both in the work areas and in the breakroom.
- c. If you are closing operations to clean for 24 hours, then tell the media this. Similarly, if you are disinfecting high-touch surfaces including counters, tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, phones, keyboards, tablets, tables, tell the media about these sanitizing measures.
- d. Cooperation and compliance with OHA, ODA and Oregon OSHA in inspections and employee safety.

# CUSTOMER COMMUNICATIONS

Your customers and partners will want to hear from you and know you are handling the situation swiftly and responsibly.

Consider ceasing operations for 24 hours for a deep disinfect of all high touch surfaces and tell your customers of your plan to do so. Consider drafting a letter, email and/or web post on your site about having had an outbreak.

Places to post consumer information (from the CDC):

- Your website
- Call center established
- Social media messages
- Webinars, conference calls with partner organizations, such as offering advice from partner healthcare providers
- Digital press kit for news media

It's difficult to predict when things will get "back to normal," which means businesses can't always make promises about their own timelines for reopening and/or ramping up services. However, communicating about how you plan to continue serving customers, while being transparent about any areas of uncertainty, is appreciated.



# SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS

- For visitor-facing wineries, your communication strategy should also include social media
- Establish best practices before harvest
  - Show that you're keeping staff and guests safe
- If/when an outbreak occurs, refer to your talking points for social media communications
  - A crisis is not the time to pause communications
  - List the steps you're taking for the safety of your staff and guests
  - Preemptively answer questions your followers will have
  - Communicate with sincerity
- Engage with your community
- Balance content

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