

Ethical Considerations Regarding Meat Processing Plant Operations, Worker Safety, and Community Welfare

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University of Nebraska
Medical Center
Nebraska Medicine



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Outbreaks

AP

Virus closes some meat plants, raising fears of shortages

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By JOSH FUNK April 13, 2020



After coronavirus outbreak, Tyson temporarily closes Nebraska beef plant for cleaning

State health officials in recent days have reported hundreds of new coronavirus cases and nearby Sioux City, Iowa.



Essential Industry

EXECUTIVE ORDERS

Executive Order on Delegating Authority Under the DPA with Respect to Food Supply Chain Resources During the National Emergency Caused by the Outbreak of COVID-19

— LAND & AGRICULTURE | Issued on: April 28, 2020



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Ethics Advisory Committee Members

Request Ethics Consultation

Consultation Reports



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Ethics Committee Question

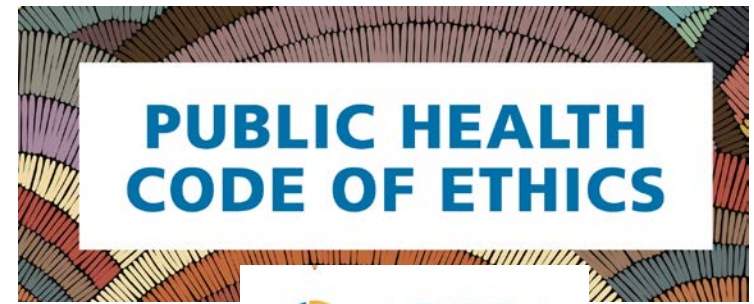
- What strategies and interventions can most effectively and ethically reduce risk for employers, employees and the community?

Important Context

- Closing not an option
- Nature of the industry and the work
- Characteristics of the workforce
- Environment of deregulation & limited enforcement
- Team from Global Center provided best infection prevention, mitigation, and treatment advice via playbook and CDC/OSHA guidance
- Pandemic conditions

Core Ethical Values

- Health and safety
 - Protecting health
 - Effectiveness
 - Least restrictive means
- Health justice and equity
 - Accountability and transparency (fair process)
 - Fair/equitable allocation of burdens and risks
- interdependence and solidarity
 - Community
 - Mutual respect
 - **Reciprocity**



RECIPROCITY

COVID-19 disproportionately burdens some groups – including workers in essential industries. This disproportionate burden creates reciprocal obligations on others, including their employers, the government and community organizations. These include the responsibility to keep those deemed essential as safe as possible, which, in turn will minimize possible harms to others, including their families and other community members. Information about and access to health care for COVID-19 should be provided to all workers.

PROTECTING HEALTH

It is the obligation of regulators to require preventive measures at all plants, thereby protecting workers and the community from infection. In addition, paid sick leave and no-cost testing should be provided. People who are infected and unable to obtain a test might not know they are infectious, thereby posing greater risk to others in their workplace and community.

REDUCING BURDEN

Sacrifice is an inevitable part of burden-sharing in a community. It is the obligation of regulators and enforcement agencies to require preventive measures at all plants, thereby protecting workers and the community from infection, and establishing a level playing field for the industry. A level regulatory field ensures that burdens from addressing the pandemic are distributed equitably. Businesses that operate and benefit economically from plant operations must shoulder some burdens, as must workers and other community members.

REDUCING HARM

Reduction of harm entails limiting infections while also limiting any adverse impacts of public health measures. Administrative and engineering controls should be implemented and enforced to ensure the safety of workers. Lack of paid sick leave and penalizations for illness-related absences during the pandemic harm not only the worker but also the health and wellbeing of co-workers and the local community and the financial security of the plant.

Ethical Pillars

- ***Pillar #1: On-site Prevention***
- ***Pillar #2: Off-site Prevention***
- ***Pillar #3: Treatment and Remediation***

Pillar 1: On site prevention

- *Implement administrative and engineering controls per CDC/OHSA guidance*
- *Provide adequate PPE*
- *Adjust line speeds and workflows to ensure safety*
- *Ensure consistent communication of pandemic specific policies at all levels*
- *Provide worker education on infection prevention*

Pillar 2: Off-site Prevention

- *Ensure adequate housing, especially for those in quarantine or isolation*
- *Provide transportation alternatives where possible*
- *Partner with public health departments and community organizations to foster culturally and linguistically appropriate outreach to community*

Pillar 3: Treatment and remediation

- *Provide sick leave without penalty and suspend attendance bonuses*
- *Provide no-cost, confidential testing*
- *Provide health care for those who develop COVID-19 illness*

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Meatprocessing Facility Operations

- **Ethics Advisory Committee Members**

- **Request Ethics Consultation**

- ▼ **Consultation Reports**

- **Comfort-Only Care Unit**

June 26, 2020

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Background



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Thank you!!

- Questions?
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