



MIOSHA Fact Sheet

General Industry Safety & Health Division

Agricultural Field Sanitation

What is Agricultural Field Sanitation?

This term refers to the necessity to provide potable drinking water, toilets, and handwashing facilities at any farm where employees work in hand labor activities. These employees may be migrants or permanent residents of Michigan, who work either full- or part-time. Hand-labor is defined as using the hands or hand tools for cultivation, weeding, planting, and harvesting of vegetables, nuts, fruits, seedlings, or other crops, including mushrooms. It also includes packing of produce into containers, whether done on the ground, on a moving machine, or in a temporary packing shed located in the field. Hand-labor does not include such activities as logging operations, the care or feeding of livestock, or hand-labor operations in permanent structures (e.g., canning facilities or packing houses).

What MIOSHA regulations apply to field sanitation?

There are two MIOSHA regulations that apply to field sanitation. [MIOSHA Part 500, Field Sanitation Standard](#), and [Section 14n of the MIOASH Act \(Act 154 of 1974 as amended\)](#), describe responsibilities agricultural employers have to provide adequate field sanitation facilities. The requirements of the Field Sanitation Standard cover agricultural employers with 11 or more employees at any time in a year. Requirements in Section 14n of the MIOASH Act are limited to providing potable drinking water at no cost to employees, and to providing or making toilets and handwashing facilities available. However, Section 14n applies to all agricultural employers with at least one (1) employee.

What are the Part 500, Field Sanitation requirements for employers?

The following requirements apply where there are 11 or more covered employees.

Drinking water

- The employer must provide drinking water at no cost to employees.
- Drinking water must be potable. Potable means it must be tested and approved as safe for drinking. If the drinking water is well water that has an odor or color, but has been tested and approved to be potable, the well water is acceptable.
- Drinking water must be provided in adequate quantities to prevent employees from becoming sick due to dehydration or heat-related illnesses. The quantity of water to be provided will vary depending on the type of work, the temperature or humidity, and sunlight.
- Drinking water must be dispensed in single-use drinking cups or by fountains. The use of common drinking cups or dippers is prohibited.
- Drinking water containers must be constructed of materials that maintain water quality. These containers must be refilled daily or more often as necessary. They must be kept covered and regularly cleaned.

Toilets and handwashing facilities

A toilet in a farm field can be a fixed or portable facility and may be a biological, chemical, flush or combustion toilet or even a sanitary privy; such as a “Portajohn.” Handwashing facilities may be provided either inside or outside the toilet closet.

Requirements for toilet and handwashing facilities

- Adequate amounts of toilet paper must be provided in each toilet facility.
- Toilet and handwashing facilities must also be adequately ventilated, appropriately screened, have self-closing doors that can be closed and latched from the inside, and must be built to insure privacy.
- Toilet and handwashing facilities must be placed in a location that is accessible to all employees and in close proximity to each other. The facilities must be located within a ¼ mile walk of each hand-laborer's place of work in the field.
- If it is not possible to locate toilets within ¼ mile because of hills or other land features, toilets must be located at the point closest to vehicular access.
- Toilet and handwashing facilities do not have to be provided if all employees perform field work for three (3) hours or less (including transportation time to and from the field) during the day.
- Toilet facilities shall be operational and maintained in clean and sanitary condition.
- Handwashing facilities shall be refilled with potable water as necessary to ensure an adequate supply and must be maintained in a clean and sanitary condition.
- Disposal of wastes from facilities shall not cause unsanitary conditions.

Additional employer responsibilities:

- Each employee must be told where the sanitation facilities and drinking water are located.
- Each employee must be allowed reasonable opportunities and time during the workday, to use toilet and handwashing facilities and obtain drinking water.

- Each employee must be informed about the following good hygiene practices:
 - Proper use of the water and sanitation facilities provided. Employers should explain why drinking water is potable even though it may have an odor, taste or color.
 - It is necessary to drink water frequently, especially on hot days.
 - Employees need to urinate as frequently as necessary.
 - Employees must wash hands before and after using the toilet and before eating and smoking.
- Employers must explain that good hygiene work practices need to be followed in order to protect workers from illnesses or injuries that could result from exposure to the hazards of heat, communicable diseases, and retention of urine and agricultural residues.

What are the requirements in Section 14n of the MIOASH Act that apply when there is at least one agricultural employee?

- Agricultural employers must provide, at no cost to employees, potable drinking water in locations that are readily accessible to all of these employees.
- Agricultural employers who employ fewer than 11 agricultural employees must ensure that an available toilet facility and a hand-washing facility is either provided by or made available to the agricultural employees.

How can I get more information?

More information is available from the MIOASHA Consultation Education and Training Division at (517) 322-1809 or on-line at www.michigan.gov/cet.

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