

Food Resilience Industry Forum

Cohorting- Good Practices Identified by Industry- 12.11.20

Overview:

Cohorts are a secondary line of defence against the spread of infection and are an important part of risk management. They can significantly reduce the impact of an outbreak and improve the likelihood of maintaining operations in a factory should an outbreak occur. Careful consideration needs to be given to the size of the cohort, manufacturing requirements, skills required in the cohort and must be kept as small as practicably possible.

Cohorting is a secondary line of defence and must be complemented by other measures. These primary measures include Social Distancing, handwashing, specific COVID training, enhanced cleaning and rules for transportation. All Government guidelines for self-isolation must be followed.

- 1. Cohorts can be by time (shift) and/or space (area of work).** Breaks should be staggered, and a cohort should take the break together. Additional smoking areas and seating should be provided. Wherever possible use vacant space to create additional temporary facilities.
Individual site assessments are important to identify factors which could break cohorts. e.g. the need to move people between lines to meet orders, overtime and non-conventional shift patterns.
- 2. Cohorts should be as small as practicably possible.** Achieving a skills-mix in a cohort can build resilience in factory and management roles. Households can be encouraged to work in the same cohort. A cohort of 6-12 is preferable with an absolute maximum of 25. Justifications for cohorts exceeding 6 in number may be requested by public health officials. The ability to clearly define and evidence a cohort to Public Health will be key to retaining people in role in the event of an outbreak.
- 3. Cohort members should be visibly recognisable** Cohort members should be visibly recognised, considering hygiene and quality considerations -e.g. coloured lanyards, badges or vests are best. One-way systems and a coloured site map should show zones where cohorts are working together.
- 4. Cohort adherence needs to be a regular part of supervision and management, this may be exercised in real time with Marshalls and** regularly reviewed through CCTV for audit purposes and for validating track and trace protocols.
- 5. Cohorts must be identified and records retained for at least 2 weeks** in the event of an outbreak and enquiries by authorities.
- 6. Cohorts should reflect similar travel to work patterns wherever possible-** e.g. appropriate car-sharing and/or company/agency provided transport. Company provided accommodation should be segregated into cohorts-and guidance given for social settings where practicable.

7. **Special attention needs to be placed with those individuals in “butterfly” groups like Engineers, QA and Operations Managers** whose jobs tend to take them to many areas of a facility . The opportunity for alternative working arrangements should be reviewed e.g. fixing shifts/and or use of appropriate PPE.