



# HOUSING GUIDELINES

FOR SEASONAL FARM WORKERS



This document is intended to assist local public health and other agencies in assessing the suitability of housing intended for the housing of both domestic and SAWP (Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program) administered by F.A.R.M.S. (Foreign Agricultural Resource Management Services) and NOC C&D (Agricultural Low Skill).

These recommendations are the result of consultation with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Ontario Fire Marshal's Office, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, Foreign Agricultural Resource Management Services, numerous local health units and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. The recommendations are to be interpreted as minimum requirements with regard to Seasonal Housing for Migrant Farm Workers.

These recommendations are designed to assist in meeting legislative and regulatory requirements and are not to be used as a replacement for specific legislative or regulatory requirements.

### **ONTARIO BUILDING CODE**

The current Ontario Building Code, a regulation made under the Ontario Building Code Act, applies to all new construction and renovations or additions to existing buildings. It is the owner's responsibility to ensure that such construction complies with the Ontario Building Code. This document does not identify all applicable provisions of the Ontario Building Code.

### **ONTARIO FIRE CODE**

While farm buildings used for agricultural purposes are generally exempt from the Fire Code, the exemption does not apply to buildings with residential occupancies. As such, existing buildings used to provide sleeping accommodations for seasonal workers must conform to the Fire Code. Questions should be directed to your municipal fire department.

## **LOCATION**

- Buildings to be used as housing for seasonal occupants should be located in well-drained ground at least 30 metres (100 ft.) from any building used or intended to be used for sheltering animals or for poultry husbandry likely to cause offensive environmental conditions or other environmental conditions that may be hazardous to health.
- Housing is detached from any building where highly flammable materials are used or stored.
- Multiple dwellings (i.e. trailers, portables) are required to have ten metres of space between each.

# CONSTRUCTION

Buildings to be used as housing for seasonal occupants should be weatherproof and so constructed that:

- Floors are tight-fitting, smooth-surfaced, impervious to moisture and readily cleanable.
- Walls are tight-fitting and the interior is lined with a smooth, painted or treated surface material.
- Roofs are tight-fitting and waterproof.
- Adequate lighting and ventilation are provided at all times by either natural or artificial means, or a combination of these.
- Screens on all openings to the outside are provided between the first day of May to the first day of November.
- A minimum temperature of 20°C (68°F) can be maintained.
- Where combustion-type stoves or heaters are used, they should be vented directly to outside air.
- No toilet room or combined toilet room opens directly into any room used for the preparation, storage or serving of food.
- Implement rodent and/or pest control where necessary. Mobile homes should have skirting (rodent control).
- Safety hazards are eliminated.



## OCCUPANCY CALCULATION

When building or renovating seasonal farm worker housing, consider the following:

- A total useable floor area of at least 7.44 square metres (80 sq. ft.) per person with a minimum of 8.5 cubic metres (300 cu. ft.) of air space per person in the sleeping area is required.
- The floor area of washrooms is not considered useable living area and will not be included in the calculation of useable floor area.
- Walls must extend a minimum of 2.13 metres (7 ft.) above floor level. Walls may be higher but, 2.44 metres (8 ft.) will be used as a maximum for calculation of airspace in the sleeping areas.

# SLEEPING FACILITIES



## Seasonal workers only *(not family housing)*

### Each bunk must be:

- Separate with a suitable amount of space above/ below each bunk, and sleep only one person.
- At least 30 centimetres (12 inches) above the floor.
- Provided with a clean pillow and mattress of sound construction.
- At least 46 centimetres (18 inches) apart from the next bunk when not lying lengthwise along the walls.
- Provided with one locker or one shelf for each bunk, or the equivalent.
- A supply of clean blankets, sheets and pillowcases must be provided upon arrival.
- Bedrooms are required to have a wall separating them from other living areas.

## Family housing *(for seasonal workers)*

### Should have:

- A kitchen with food storing, preparing and cooking facilities should be provided and this space should not be used as a sleeping room.
- Basic furnishing, such as tables, chairs and beds, compatible with the maximum occupancy. See below.
- Bedrooms are required to have a wall separating them from other living areas.



## CALCULATING OCCUPANCY FOR SLEEPING FACILITIES

**When calculating maximum occupancy, the following applies to the sleeping facilities:**

- A maximum occupancy rate of one person per 8.5 cubic metres (300 cubic feet) of air space.

**Note:** Children under six years to be considered as one half for the purposes of calculating maximum occupancy.

# WASHROOM FACILITIES AND SEWAGE DISPOSAL



- Fly-tight, weatherproof, well-ventilated toilet accommodations should be provided for every 10 occupants, or part thereof.
- Toilet facilities must have suitable privacy barriers.
- Flush toilets are to be kept in good repair and operate effectively.
- Toilet tissue should be provided for all toilet accommodations.
- No toilet room or combined toilet room and washroom opens directly into any room used for the preparation, storage or serving of food.
- Portable privies should be under a service contract and must be equipped with hand sanitation facilities such as wet wipes/ alcohol solution.
- All sewage is to be disposed of in a manner consistent with the provisions of the Building Code Act and Regulations.



## CALCULATING OCCUPANCY FOR WASHROOMS

- One washbasin for every seven occupants.
- One toilet for every 10 occupants.
- One shower for every 10 occupants.
- Washroom floor space is not included in the maximum occupancy calculation.

# WATER SUPPLY

- Housing for seasonal occupants must provide a readily available supply of bacteriological safe water in sufficient supply to provide for drinking, washing, food preparation and laundering.
- Best management practices of wellhead protection should be applied to maintain a safe water supply.
- Hot and cold water must be readily available.
- When drinking water is provided in a container, it must be bacteriologically safe, and the container should be clean, sanitary, covered and equipped with a sanitary dispensing device.
- A separate drinking vessel must be provided for each occupant.





# FOOD SAFETY



## When food is prepared BY workers

- Food storage and refrigeration facilities must be provided.
- Provide an adequate:
  - i. Amount of kitchenware (plates, cups, bowls, knives, forks, spoons, etc.).
  - ii. Number of pots and pans.
  - iii. Number of stoves and refrigerators.
  - iv. Amount of cupboards and food storage space.
  - v. Number of kitchen table(s) and chairs.
  - vi. Number of utensils for cooking and serving food for the number of people being housed.



- Food shall be stored so that it is protected from contamination.
- All hazardous foods are to be stored in adequate refrigeration to maintain a temperature not exceeding 4°C (40°F).

## When food is prepared FOR workers

- If food is prepared for 10 or more persons, Food Premises Regulation 562 applies to the food preparation area.
- If food is prepared for less than 10 occupants, the food preparation area is exempt from Regulation 562. However:
  - i. No cups, glasses or dishes that are chipped or cracked shall be supplied/used in the preparation, service and storage of food.
  - ii. No utensil in such a condition as to prevent its effective cleansing and sanitizing shall be used in the preparation, service or storage of food.
  - iii. Facilities are to be supplied for washing dishes/utensils in water at a temperature of not less than 43°C (110°F) containing a detergent solution capable of removing all grease/food particles, etc.
- iv. Dishes/utensils to be:
  - Sanitized by an acceptable method.
  - Dried by exposure to air.
- Equipment and appliances in the food preparation and dining areas shall be constructed as to permit the maintenance of these areas in a clean and sanitary condition.
- Kitchen and dining areas should be kept free from material and equipment that are not regularly used in a kitchen or a dining area.

## GARBAGE

Provisions for adequate garbage disposal shall include the following:

- Rodent and insect-proof garbage containers, which can readily be cleaned and sanitized shall be provided for all buildings used for seasonal housing and in sufficient quantity to store all garbage accumulated between collections.
- Garbage shall be collected and removed for sanitary disposal at least once every week.

## LAUNDRY

Laundry facilities shall provide the following:

- At least one laundering tub for every 15 bunks, or equivalent.
- Drying facilities for laundry.
- Or, access to a laundromat once per week.



## SAFETY

- Although Southwestern Public Health is not responsible for enforcing the Fire Code, it will be monitoring seasonal worker housing for:
  - i. The presence or absence of smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors.
  - ii. The presence or absence of fire extinguishers.
- Buildings used for housing seasonal farm workers and their surroundings should be free from any chemical substances or condition, that may become hazardous to the occupants.
- Buildings shall comply with the provisions of the Ontario Fire Code. It is the responsibility of the owner/operator to ensure that the facility is compliant with the Fire Code.
- Fire extinguisher(s) are to be fully charged, have a recent certificate that they have been recharged, properly located and securely mounted. Minimum requirement is ABC rating. (Note: This is a safety protocol. The Health Unit does not enforce the Ontario Fire Code.)
- Smoke alarm(s) and carbon monoxide detector(s) are to be provided, properly located, operational and securely mounted.





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