

AVIAN INFLUENZA (BIRD FLU) BEST PRACTICES

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration provides the following information on Avian Influenza:

General Recommendations for Employers

Employers should first conduct a [hazard analysis](#) to identify workers at risk of exposure to avian influenza viruses. Consider work operations and tasks that could lead to an occupational exposure, such as handling dead birds.

Following the hazard analysis, select appropriate controls, including engineering controls, administrative controls, safe work practices, and personal protective equipment (PPE), based on the results of the hazard analysis. Some controls may be required by [OSHA Standards](#). Others will be best practices suggested by local, County, and State authorities.

Offer workers the seasonal influenza vaccine. The seasonal influenza vaccine will not prevent avian influenza but can reduce the likelihood of getting sick with both human and avian influenza viruses at the same time.

Ensure all workers have access to hand washing facilities equipped with adequate hand-washing supplies in accordance with [29 CFR 1910.141](#).

Visit the [Center for Disease Control \(CDC\) offers additional Avian Influzena resources](#) for more information.

Personal Protective Equipment

Provide workers with PPE based on the results of the hazard analysis. PPE might include but is not limited to:

- Disposable gloves
- Disposable protective shoe covers or boots,
- Disposable head cover or hair cover, and if needed beard cover
- Protective fluid-resistant or chemical-impermeable clothing.
- Properly-fitted unvented or indirectly vented safety goggles.
- If it is determined that workers need respirators, use a [NIOSH-approved](#) air-purifying respirators with a particulate filter that is rated N95 or higher. Respirators must be used as part of a comprehensive respiratory protection program that meets the provisions of OSHA's Respiratory Protection Standard ([29 CFR 1910.134](#)).

See OSHA's [Personal Protective Equipment Safety and Health Topics](#) and [Respiratory Protection Safety and Health Topics](#) pages and the [CDC's Interim Guidance for Employers to Reduce the Risk of Novel Influenza A for People Working with or Exposed to Animals](#) for additional information on PPE

Employers should implement programs to protect workers from the effects of heat stress when using PPE, which can be more insulating than regular work clothing. Refer to OSHA's [Protecting Workers from Heat Stress](#) and the [Occupational Heat Exposure Safety and Health Topics](#) page for more information.

Training

Train workers who may have contact with potentially infected birds, materials, or people to understand their risk of exposure to avian influenza based on the jobs they perform. Make sure that workers understand the protective measures to prevent or reduce exposure to avian influenza. Training should include housekeeping practices, when and how to sanitize surfaces, and how to minimize dust (e.g., wetting/misting).

Train workers to use PPE appropriately. OSHA requires training on when to use PPE; what PPE is necessary; how to properly put on, use and take off PPE; how to properly dispose of or disinfect, inspect for damage and maintain PPE; and the limitations of PPE. Applicable standards in 29 CFR 1910 Subpart I include those for personal protective equipment (29 CFR 1910.132), eye and face protection (29 CFR 1910.133), hand protection (29 CFR 1910.138) and respiratory protection (29 CFR 1910.134). OSHA offers a variety of [training videos on respiratory protection](#).

Workers with an additional exposure risk when evaluating or treating patients with suspected or confirmed avian influenza infection or when handling laboratory specimens from these patients, may require supplemental Bloodborne Pathogen training.

Cleaning and Disinfecting

Protect workers from chemical exposures when cleaning and disinfecting areas, surfaces, and equipment potentially contaminated with avian influenza. Where respiratory protection is worn, respirators must be used as part of a comprehensive respiratory protection program meeting the requirements of OSHA's [Respiratory Protection Standard](#). OSHA standards for PPE ([29 CFR 1910 Subpart I](#)) and [Hazard Communication](#) require employers to protect workers.

General Precautions for Workers

1. **Avoid unprotected contact with birds and bird secretions or excrement.** This includes inhalation of dust contaminated with bird secretions and excrement.
2. **Wear PPE that is appropriate for the job task(s) performed and use PPE properly.** Use gloves appropriate for the task. Wear lightweight, disposable gloves or heavy-duty rubber work gloves that can be easily cleaned and disinfected. Avoid touching your face with gloved hands. Wear disposable outer garments with long, cuffed sleeves, and a waterproof apron. Wear disposable shoe covers or boots that can be easily cleaned and disinfected. Wear safety goggles and a disposable head or hair covering and if needed, beard covering.

While wearing PPE, avoid eating, drinking, and smoking. Remove gloves promptly after use and change gloves if torn, punctured, or otherwise damaged. Remove all PPE at work to avoid taking contaminated items home.

3. **Wear respiratory protection.** A NIOSH-certified N95 filtering facepiece respirator or better should be worn as part of a comprehensive respiratory protection program that includes medical exams, training, and fit testing, and that meets the requirements of OSHA's Respiratory Protection standard ([29 CFR 1910.134](#)). If unable to wear a disposable particulate respirator because of facial hair or other fit limitations, wear respirators that do not require a face seal (e.g., positive pressure respirators of the hood and helmet type, or types that can be used with a continuous-flow, supplied-air respirator). Respirators may also be provided for [voluntary use](#).

The particulate respirators recommended above are not appropriate for protection against chemicals used in disinfection activities. The OSHA Safety and Health Information Bulletin [Avian Influenza - Protecting Poultry Workers at Risk](#) provides a table listing the advantages, disadvantages, and costs of the five types of air-purifying respirators in order of increasing levels of protection. See [2004 NIOSH Respirator Selection Logic](#) for guidance on the protective capabilities of respirators.

4. **Carefully clean and disinfect contaminated areas.** Use U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) [registered antimicrobial products with label claims for avian influenza](#). Carefully follow the directions on the label to handle and safely use the antimicrobial product and avoid harm to workers and the environment. Employers must also follow requirements in mandatory OSHA standards for Hazard Communication, [29 CFR 1910.1200](#), and PPE, 29 CFR [1910.132](#), [.133](#), [.134](#), and [.138](#), when these chemicals are used.
5. **Follow good hand hygiene and decontamination practices.** Wash hands thoroughly and frequently for at least 15 seconds with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use [hand sanitizer](#) containing at least 60 percent alcohol. Hand hygiene is especially important after contact with infected or exposed poultry; after contact with surfaces contaminated with bird mucus, saliva, or feces; after removing PPE; and prior to eating, drinking, smoking or bathroom use. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides additional information about effective [hand hygiene](#) practices. Shower at the end of each shift (or as soon as possible).
6. **Get the seasonal influenza (flu) vaccine.** The seasonal flu vaccine will not prevent avian influenza but can reduce the likelihood of getting sick with both human and avian influenza viruses at the same time.
7. **If you are sick, stay at home except to get medical attention.** If you believe that you may have been exposed to avian influenza, tell your employer and [monitor your health for 10 days](#). If you become ill with a fever or develop a cough or difficulty breathing, consult with your healthcare provider and contact your state or local health department for additional guidance.