



Meeting Minutes: Governor's Committee on the Safety, Health, and Wellbeing of Agricultural and Food Processing Workers

DATE: 4/24/2025

MINUTES PREPARED BY: CINTHIA MARTINEZ

Attendance

Committee Members

Present

Erik Zabel, Epidemiologist Principal, Minnesota Department of Health

Marc Majors, Deputy Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development

Maureen Ramirez, Chief of Staff Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry

Patrice Bailey, Assistant Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Agriculture

Sarah Berry

Rodolfo Gutierrez, Executive Director, Hispanic Advocacy and Community Empowerment Through Research

Sarah Berry, Public Health Director, Waseca County | CHS Administrator, Le Sueur – Waseca Community Health Board

Staff Present: Cinthia Martinez, CareerForce Office Coordinator, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development; Valerie Gamble, State Program Admin Principal, Minnesota Department of Agriculture

Agenda

- Introduction
- Welcome
- Overview of the EO
- Updates
- Comments
- Adjourn

Introduction

Welcome

Updates

Erik (MDH)- We are in the phase of greatest uncertainty. Everything is a risk, even if it hasn't been cut yet. Infectious disease has been a national leader in dealing with HPAI, and our team has been working to stay on top of it. Cuts are putting those kinds of investigations at risk, so that's what we're facing at MDH. The issues affect all Minnesotans, including agricultural workers.

Rodolfo (HACER)- Our capacity to work with the community, particularly the immigrant community, has been reached. We received a grant from MDH and their covid coordinator for vaccines during the

pandemic. Workers have requested vaccines against covid and flu, but we cannot provide them. According to them, they do not trust anyone else but this organization for this support. In addition, many of them plan to return home because they fear being deported without reason. We receive many calls from children of immigrants who are afraid of their futures and lives from our hotline. We are trying to recruit participants for our Avian Flu studies, but they are not willing to take part anymore due to fear. Trying to reconnect with them these past months has been challenging. They are waiting for some state government statement confirming that they are safe, and we are working to protect them. They feel like no one is helping them.

Maureen (DOL)- The safe workplaces for meat processing workers passed legislation and funded the workers' rights coordinator position. His role includes visiting plants, managers, and employees, and he would be happy to come and introduce Himself. As we have more capacity, we will be able to engage workers and meat packing workers more effectively. Additionally, we are tracking an increase in line speeds, which has led to those plants speeding up and posing a safety risk to workers. Several concerns about excessive heat and additional protections were raised, but with rule-making frozen, those options are no longer available. In DLI, the federal standard is feeling okay, and we are not suffering cuts like in health and other large agencies. OSHA funding is not expected to decrease, but it will remain flat.

Overview of EO

The previous Executive Order had to be amended because it is post-covid. The meetings are now held quarterly instead of twice a month as before. The objective is to develop a productive strategy. We are under a new administration and have not heard about reinforcement in this capacity. Our understanding is that business is as usual, but we would like to hear from all committee members if there is anything you are doing.

Comments

Public comments

Adjourn