



# Seasonal Farm Worker HOUSING GUIDELINES

# IMPORTANT NOTICE

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 is in compliance with the Ontario Building Code. This document does not identify all applicable provisions of the Ontario Building Code. Contact the municipal building department for additional information.

## **Norfolk County Building and By-Law Administration Division**

22 Albert St., Langton ON  
Phone: 519-875-4485 Fax: 519-875-4789

## **Haldimand County Building and By-Law Enforcement Division**

282 Argyle Street S., Caledonia, ON  
Phone: 905-318-5367 Fax: 905-765-1436

The Ontario Fire Code is a provincial regulation intended to ensure fire safety for buildings and premises in Ontario. 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 that are used to provide sleeping accommodations for seasonal workers must conform to the Fire Code. It is the responsibility of the farm owner/operator to comply with the Fire Code. Questions on Fire Code application should be directed to your municipal fire department.

## **Norfolk County Fire Department**

95 Culver Street, Simcoe, ON  
Phone: 519-426-4115 Fax: 519-426-4140

## **Haldimand County Fire Department**

117 Forest Street East, Dunnville, ON  
Phone: 905-318-0159 Fax: 905-701-0200

*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) administered by Service Canada, Simcoe Ontario.*

*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.*

June 2, 2005  
(Revised April 8, 2010)

# 1. Premise 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 meters of space between each.

# 2. 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 Note

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 in the washrooms is not considered to be useable living area and will not be included in the calculation of useable floor area.
- Walls must extend from a minimum of 2.13 metres (7 ft.) to a maximum of 2.44 metres (8 ft.) above floor level. Walls may be higher but 2.44 metres (8 ft.) will be used for calculation of airspace in the sleeping areas.

### 3. Sleeping Facilities

When a building's intended use as housing for seasonal occupants is only used for worker accommodations (i.e. not family housing), each bunk is to be:	When a building's intended use as housing for seasonal occupants is in the form of a family housing, there should be:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Separate with a suitable amount of space above/below each bunk, and sleep only one person.</li><li>• At least 30 centimetres (12 inches) above the floor.</li><li>• Provided with a clean pillow and mattress of sound construction.</li><li>• At least 46 centimetres (18 inches) apart from the next bunk when not lying lengthwise along the walls.</li><li>• Provided with one locker or one shelf for each bunk, or the equivalent.</li><li>• A supply of clean blankets, sheets and pillowcases must be provided upon arrival.</li><li>• Bedrooms are required to have a wall separating them from other living areas.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A kitchen with food storing, preparing and cooking facilities should be provided and this space should not be used as a sleeping room.</li><li>• Basic furnishing such as tables, chairs and beds, compatible with the maximum occupancy.</li><li>• Bedrooms are required to have a wall separating them from other living areas.</li></ul>

#### Occupancy Calculation Note

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.
- A maximum occupancy rate of one person per 7.44 square metres (80 square feet) of total useable floor area.

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



## 4. 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.

### Occupancy Calculation Note

When calculating maximum occupancy, the following applies to the washrooms:

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

## 5. Laundry Facilities

Laundry facilities shall provide the following:

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

## 6. Garbage Disposal

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.

## 7. Water Supply

- Housing for seasonal occupants must be provided with a readily available supply of bacteriological safe water in sufficient supply to provide for drinking, washing, food preparation and laundering.
- Best management practices of well-head 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.



## 8. Food

- 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 workers are preparing food for their own use within seasonal housing:

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

### Where food is being prepared and served as part of the accommodation:

- If food is being prepared for 10 or more persons, the Food Premises Regulation 562 applies to the food preparation area.
- If food is being prepared for less than 10 occupants, the food preparation area is exempt from the Food Premises Regulation 562. However:
  - No cups, glasses or dishes that are chipped or cracked shall be supplied/used in the preparation, service and storage of food.
  - 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.
  - 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 and food particles, etc.
  - 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.

## 9. Safety

- a. Although the Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit is not responsible for enforcing the Fire Code, it will be monitoring seasonal worker housing for:
  - i. The presence or absence of smoke alarms
  - ii. The presence or absence of fire extinguishers
- b. 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.
- c. Buildings used for housing seasonal occupants 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.
- d. 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.)
- e. Smoke alarm(s) are to be provided, properly located, operational and securely mounted. (Note: This is a safety protocol. The Health Unit does not enforce the Fire Code.)

## 10. Calculating Maximum Occupancy

Occupancy of a facility is to be calculated on the lesser number of:		
<b>Airspace in Sleeping Areas</b>	8.5 cubic metres (300 cubic feet) per person in a sleeping area.*	To calculate, determine volume of airspace in bedrooms in cubic feet (length x width x height) and divide by 300.
<b>Floor Space</b>	7.44 square metres (80 square feet) person of total usable floor area, which includes living and sleeping area but does not include washrooms. **	To calculate, determine the area of floor space in square feet (length x width) not including the washrooms and divide by 80.
<b>Sanitary Fixtures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I washbasin for every seven workers</li> <li>I shower for every 10 workers</li> <li>I toilet "facility" for every 10 workers</li> </ul>	To calculate, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add up the number of washbasins and multiply by 7.</li> <li>• Add up the number of showers and multiply by 10.</li> <li>• Add up the number of toilets and multiply by 10.</li> </ul>

\* Note: Walls may be higher than 8 feet but only a maximum of 2.44 metres (8 ft.) will be used for calculation of airspace in the sleeping areas.

\*\* Note: living, sleeping, kitchen facilities and washroom facilities can be located in separate buildings but need to be conveniently located for easy access.

If you have any questions regarding your seasonal housing accommodation, please call your Public Health Inspector.

All facilities in Haldimand and Norfolk Counties that are used to house seasonal farm workers are to be inspected yearly. Inspections should be conducted prior to worker arrival. The fee for inspection is to be paid on application for inspection.

*Created July 2011*

---

Simcoe:  
P.O. Box 247, 12 Gilbertson Drive  
Simcoe, ON N3Y 4L1  
519.426.6170 or 905.318.6623

Caledonia:  
282 Argyle Street South  
Caledonia, ON N3W 1K7  
905.318.5367

**HealthUnit**  
Haldimand-Norfolk  
www.hnhu.org ■ info@hnhu.org