

Press Release – 05.06.2020

The City Of Monmouth and the Warren County Health Department have been working with Smithfield Foods during the COVID-19 pandemic to provide support, technical assistance and to address constituent concerns regarding business impactions. Upon review, the measures being taken to ensure worker safety and continued operations have been found to be very comprehensive.

- Smithfield will begin voluntary COVID-19 testing of all plant employees
- All employees wear face masks and shields while working in the plant
- Comprehensive symptom screening is performed before employees are allowed to enter the facility
- No worker is permitted to work while sick and thermal scanning is performed daily
- Plexiglass barriers have been installed in areas where employees are not able to maintain adequate distance from other employees
- Sanitization is performed after every work shift
- A work crew has been assigned to sanitize employee hands every 15 minutes
- Outdoor structures have been constructed to enable worker breaks in the open air with social distancing
- Picnic and lunch tables have had plexiglass barriers installed in order to separate employees from potential contact
- The use of all communal appliances like microwaves and vending machines have been discontinued in an effort to reduce cross contamination
- Sanitary fogging is conducted multiple times a day
- A work crew has been assigned to disinfect all contact surfaces 24/7 with a mixture of chlorine and ammonia
- Air circulation and exchange has been restricted
- Employees over the age of 60 may opt for a paid leave due to an increased risk of complications
- Daily briefings and regular site inspections are being held with the Warren County Health Department and the City Of Monmouth
- A comprehensive operations plan has been reviewed by the CDC and the Illinois Department of Public Health

Smithfield has presented unique challenges when dealing with COVID-19 considerations. Employees at the facility commute from a 6-county radius that includes a metro area and also cross state lines. Due to the size of the area the employees reside in, it requires extensive tracing to be performed when a positive case is discovered. Further complicating the issue, contact tracing by the health department has found that the infections have occurred via community spread. Community spread may result from personal interactions, confined work quarters, or public contact surfaces.

Last month Smithfield announced a voluntary two week shut down to allow them to install additional safety measures and to evaluate production techniques. Shortly thereafter, meat processing facilities were ordered to continue production to the best of their ability under the Defense Production Act. This executive order by the President of The United States forced an escalation of the facilities timetable; however, upon inspection, it is apparent that the workers were able to implement the necessary changes in the timeframe allotted.



*Workers have barriers, face shields and masks to discourage droplet transmission
(Smithfield supplied photo)*



*Cleaning crews conduct large scale sanitization procedures
(Smithfield supplied photo)*