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## Oregon OSHA announces changes to housing rules for agricultural workers

*New standards to take effect this spring*

(Salem) — The Oregon Occupational Safety and Health Division (Oregon OSHA) today announced it has completed a revision of rules governing employer-provided housing for agricultural workers. The new rules will take effect on May 1, 2008, with the exception of some specific changes that are delayed one year because they are likely to require permitting.

More than 10,000 agricultural workers, mostly seasonal, live in housing provided by their employers. The new rules address concerns by worker advocate organizations about a number of areas, including heat and adequacy of bathing and laundry facilities. The rules will also benefit employers by providing greater consistency in inspection standards. Currently, both Oregon OSHA and the U.S. Department of Labor inspect agricultural labor housing using three sets of rules.

Oregon OSHA, a division of the Department of Consumer & Business Services, held meetings with business owners, industry and consumer groups and state leaders, along with public hearings across the state to develop the new standards.

Under the new rules:

- The ratios for cooking facilities and of required bathing, toilet and hand washing facilities have all been brought into line with federal requirements
- Laundry facilities must be provided in the federal ratio of one for every 30 occupants and must be on-site; workers can no longer be left dependent upon facilities in the nearest town.
- Heat must be provided that is capable of keeping living areas at 68 degrees at any time that the housing is occupied.
- The requirements to separate livestock operations and housing have been brought into closer alignment with federal rules, while still attempting to provide clearer guidance that takes into account various camp configurations.
- For older housing built before 1975, current square footage requirements will remain in place until 2018, when all living areas will be required to include 100 square feet per person.

“Before these changes, government agencies had varying standards,” said Michael Wood, Oregon OSHA Administrator. “The new rules will put Oregon in line with federal OSHA

requirements to better protect farm workers, without eliminating the greater clarity and practicality of the previous state standards.”

For information on the changes, go to:

<http://www.orosha.org/standards/adopted.html>.

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Oregon OSHA, a division of the Department of Consumer & Business Services, enforces the state’s workplace safety and health rules and works to improve workplace safety and health for all Oregon workers. For more information, go to [www.orosha.org](http://www.orosha.org).

The Department of Consumer and Business Services is Oregon’s largest business regulatory and consumer protection agency. For more information, visit [www.dcbs.oregon.gov](http://www.dcbs.oregon.gov).