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## SUGGESTIONS FOR SEASONAL LABOR HOUSING

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE • MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

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HOUSING REQUIREMENTS for seasonal labor employed by Michigan growers of fruits and vegetables differ greatly. It is often hard to evaluate the return to a grower for his investment in housing facilities. A substantial investment goes into the production of a bushel of fruit, a lug of berries, or a hamper of beans. Dependable and reasonably intelligent labor help improve the returns to the grower for his crop. Good housing and good labor go hand in hand.

Many growers in Michigan are interested in providing housing that will attract good labor, be reasonable in cost, and flexible in use. The suggestions in this leaflet have been assembled for this purpose. They are based on suggestions from growers, existing legal requirements, and construction and economic considerations.

### Legal Housing Requirements

**Michigan**—Recent laws regulate (1) water supply (2) waste disposal (3) food preparation centers for groups. Enforcement of these laws is the responsibility of the State Health Department and County Health Departments.

**National**—Federal housing requirements apply to all types of housing used for Nationals—labor secured from outside the United States. Enforcement is the responsibility of the Compliance Section, Bureau of Employment Security, United States Department of Labor.

**Inspection and Approval of Facilities** (all types)—Required where growers are using labor secured through Michigan Farm Labor offices. Approval is the responsibility of the Michigan Employment Securities Administration, Farm Labor Division.

**Local Building Requirements**—Be sure to check with your township or county building inspector for compliance with any local zoning restrictions.

### Types of Housing

The type of housing needed by different growers throughout Michigan varies with the amount and type of labor used, the length of time labor is used, and the time of the year labor is employed.

Housing used for three to five months should be more permanent and better equipped than housing used only three weeks a year. From a practical standpoint less inside space per person is required for short time housing periods during the warm summer months if there is suitable yard area and service facilities.

It should be noted that the recommendations for cabins and barrack type units are based on federal requirements for National workers. While these requirements are not mandatory in Michigan for all workers, following these space recommendations will make the living units more flexible.

It is essential to provide satisfactory water supply and waste disposal facilities for all types of labor housing.

### CABINS

Provide the greatest flexibility of use and grouping of workers.

Can be used for families, individual workers.

Some variation in cabin size allows grower to fit workers to unit for more efficient use of space.

Individual cabins can be fitted to seasonal needs when some labor is used for spring and fall work.

Units can be added as needed.

### BARRACKS

Least flexible type of housing.

Least cost per worker.

Requires separate sleeping and eating areas.

For male crews only.

Generally requires a cook.

## MOTEL TYPE UNITS

- For families or individual workers.
- Fixed size of rooms requires more selectivity of workers to use space efficiently.
- Less separation of workers and families.
- Some reduction in cost per unit.
- Hard to use for other purposes.

## DUAL PURPOSE AND TEMPORARY UNITS

- Can be divided storage buildings, tents, or portable buildings.
- Can reduce total housing cost.
- Requires additions to most storage buildings—to provide doors, windows, lights and separation of areas as needed.

### Types of Labor

Recognizing the likes and dislikes of the different groups and types of people in the seasonal labor force may provide some guidance in developing seasonal labor housing. Labor falls in three general groups:

#### CREWS

Families—like to sleep and eat together as a family; like some separation from the other workers; will share a single room, and often double up with some close kin.

Males—will share group housing with their own crew, quite often do not want to mix with other crews.

#### INDIVIDUAL OR SMALL GROUPS

Prefer housing separated from other workers, but are willing to share with their own small group. Such workers may come to grower in groups of 1, 2, or 3.

#### DRIVE-INS

- Require only sanitary facilities and drinking water.

### Materials and Construction

Several building materials can be used for constructing seasonal labor facilities. The best selection will depend on purpose of units, labor costs for constructing units and personal preference.

#### FRAME

##### FINISHED LUMBER AND PLYWOOD

- Easiest to work with and reasonable in cost.
- Can be cleaned by painting, washing or disinfecting.
- Least condensation problems in cool weather.
- ¾" lumber equals 8" of concrete in insulating value. There is little insulating value in aluminum or steel siding except reflection of sunshine.
- Exterior type plywood used for cabin walls, floors and exposed roofing.

#### HARD WOODS AND OTHER HOME-GROWN LUMBER

- Rough surface and uneven cut may require additional labor for construction.
- Harder to disinfect, paint and clean.
- May be lower in cost.

#### MASONRY

- Easy to clean and disinfect.
- More permanent.
- Greater condensation problems in cooler weather.
- Concrete block is less porous.
- Poured concrete floors are quite durable but cooler since they are near ground temperature (approximately 55°). Harder to warm than floor raised above ground.

#### METAL

- Reasonably easy to paint and clean.
- Prefab building usually can be assembled in place.
- Small metal building frequently portable.
- Subject to greatest change in temperature and condensation problems unless insulated.
- Noisier.

### Cabin Type Units—Construction Suggestions

Construction should provide weatherproof floors (concrete, wood, or other material) ventilation of structure, a light source, and sanitation and water supply as outlined below. Approximately 10% of floor area should be in windows, a part of which can be opened to provide cross ventilation. All cabins should be on a drained site, and reasonable distance from an undue hazard such as a highway, processing plant or refuse disposal plant, or pit. General appearance of the units and surrounding area should be neat and tidy.

#### HOUSING UNITS

Information shown in bold type are state requirements.

##### SIZE

The suggestions for housing unit size are based on 45 square feet (inside space) per person over 10 years of age, with 15 square feet additional for each child under 10. Dimensions on the cabins allow for a minimum of 45 square feet per person.

**Two workers**—10 x 12 cabin

**Three workers**—12 x 14 cabin (also serves for 2 workers and 4 children)

**Four workers**—12 x 18 cabin, 14 x 16 cabin (also serves for three workers and 4 to 6 children)

**Five workers**—14 x 18 (also serves for 3 workers and 7 children or 4 workers and 4 children)

## EQUIPMENT

### A. Units used for single male workers

Per individual—single bed, work shelf, table, chair, hanger and shelf space 18" wide and 8" deep.

### B. Units used for families

Per family—double bed for each 2 adults, double bed for each 3 children under 10, stove or 2 burner plates, table, work counter, hanger and shelf space 8" x 18" per adult occupant. Refrigeration should be available.

## SPACING AND LOCATION

Cabins should be located on reasonably well-drained and debris-free grounds. They should be spaced 15 feet apart or more.

Drives and parking areas should be segregated from play areas and well marked.

- No drives should be provided between cabins.
- One approach to the housing area by car is desirable.
- Clearly designated parking areas are recommended.

## WATER SUPPLY

### 1. Location

The water outlet should be within 200 feet of the living unit. The well shall be at least 75 feet from sources of contamination such as toilets or sewage systems.

### 2. Manual Supply (hand pumps)

Surface drainage shall be provided away from the well.

The well installation shall follow methods prescribed by the State Health Department.

### 3. Pressure Systems (not generally required)

- One outlet for each two living units.
- No pressure outlet at well location—at least 20 feet away.
- Garden hoses shall not be used for drinking water distribution.

## WASTE DISPOSAL

1. One usable toilet shall be provided for each 15 occupants. There shall be at least one toilet for each sex. One of every three stools for men may be substituted with a urinal.
2. Toilets shall be located within 150 feet, but not closer than 25 feet from the sleeping quarters.
3. Toilets must be at least 75 feet from the well.
4. Construction of the toilets must follow the recommendations of the State Department of Health.
5. Refuse (garbage cans, trash) disposal cans or pits must be provided as prescribed by the State Health Department.

## Barracks Type Units for Single Males Construction Suggestions

All suggestions are based on "U. S. Department of Labor Minimum Acceptable Housing Standards." All suggestions become requirements when facilities are used for foreign labor.

## LIVING AND SLEEPING QUARTERS

1. In new construction or additions to existing structures, 38 square feet of floor space should be provided for each worker. At least 34 square feet of floor space or 300 cubic feet of total space should be provided for each worker within the sleeping quarters of an existing structure.
2. All buildings used for living or sleeping quarters for ten or more persons should have at least two outside exits for use in case of fire, so located as to provide alternate means of escape. One exit may be a window if easily accessible and large enough to permit rapid escape.
3. A suitable and separate bed or cot should be provided for each worker.
4. Bunks should be at least 12 inches from the floor. The space between the lower and upper bunk should be approximately 3 feet; there should be at least 3 feet from the top of the upper bunk to the ceiling. A clear aisle space of at least 30 inches should be allowed between each single bed. A clear aisle space of at least 4 feet should be allowed between each set of double bunks.
5. Beds or bunks with mattresses must be provided. Canvas-covered cots should be kept clean and sanitary.
6. Every sleeping room should be provided with one or more windows (screened openings may be substituted where climatic conditions permit), having a total area of not less than 10 percent of the floor space of the room.
7. All windows should be so arranged that at least 45 percent of their total area may be opened, except where there is some other approved system of adequate ventilation. All windows or openings should be fitted with screening of at least 16 mesh.

## COOKING AND EATING FACILITIES

Check with Farm Labor Services, Michigan Employment Security Commission or State Health Department for requirements.

## SANITARY FACILITIES

1. Convenient and suitable bathing facilities separate from cooking and sleeping rooms are desirable.
2. All new construction should provide for at least one shower head for each 25 workers.
3. Workers should be provided with water of suitable temperature for bathing. (Bucket a day, elevated tank, limiting valve—suggestion.)



- Where tubs are used there should be one No. 3 size tub in good condition for every five workers.
- Adequate dressing space adjacent to bathing facilities should be provided.
- One usable toilet should be provided for each 15 workers or fraction thereof and should be located within 150 feet from living quarters. In addition, any new housing units should provide one standard urinal or urinal trough. One of every three stools for men may be substituted with a urinal. Toilet facilities should be in a separate room.

## LAUNDRY

Adequate facilities for laundry should be provided.

### Tips from Growers

- Keep grass mowed around living units and provide litter barrels to help keep an area clean.
- A camp manager can help to keep camp orderly, reduce rowdiness and encourage better cooperation among workers.
- Some swings, sandbox, and a play area help keep children busy and happy.
- A yard light left on all night at the toilet area encourages their use.
- White plastic seats encourage care even in privy-toilets.
- Barns can be fire hazards; exercise care in using them for seasonal labor housing.
- A \$5.00 deposit for facilities helps keep cabins clean and intact; the deposit is returned to the worker on leaving.
- A good formula for seasonal labor housing—simple and clean.
- All seasonal labor like a shower. Shower facilities can vary from an elevated barrel and a screen enclosure to an enclosed masonry or tile building with hot water under pressure.
- A place to wash clothes is essential.
- Each sleep unit should have at least one light bulb and a double electrical outlet.

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- Michigan State Health Department, Engineering Division
- Farm Labor Management Committee, Michigan Horticultural Society
- Cooperative Extension Agents and Growers of Michigan

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- An investment of \$100 per worker or \$500 per unit is common for seasonal housing, and about minimum for satisfactory facilities.
- Second-hand conventional size stoves and refrigerators can frequently be purchased at reasonable prices.
- Varying the size of the sleeping units helps adjust facilities to labor.
- Good facilities draw good labor.
- Labor is important—enforcing camp rules will help maintain a good crew. Effort put forth in this regard is worthwhile.
- Translucent wall panels and screened eave and gable louvers can replace windows. They will result in lower maintenance costs and better ventilation for many cabins.

## Plans and Information Available

From—Cooperative Extension Service—County Offices or Department of Agricultural Engineering, Michigan State University, East Lansing.

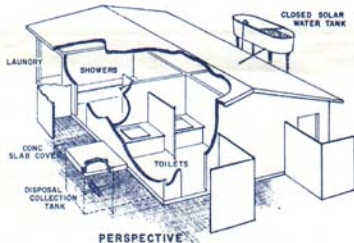
- 712-C2-49 Motel-type housing—6 units
- 712-C2-51 Court layout—cabin units
- 712-C2-52 Combination Labor Housing and Storage Buildings
- 712-C1-53 Seasonal Labor Sanitary Facility Building

From—County Health Offices or Michigan Department of Health, 3500 North Logan Street, Lansing, Michigan.

- D23.1-6 Protecting the Suction Line
- D23.1-1 Installations Providing Frost Protection
- D23.1-25 Hand Pumps and A Tubular Well
- D23.1-7 Platforms and Seals for Well Casings
- D15.2 Garbage Pit
- D64C Refuse Cans (Spanish)

From—Michigan Employment Security Commission—All local Farm Placement Offices.

- Motel-type housing plans
- Privy drawing—DFPA
- MESC Form 2533—Minimum Sanitation Standards
- Other literature pertaining to seasonal workers



Detail from plan number 712-C1-53. Seasonal Labor Sanitary Facility Building Plan available from Michigan State University Engineering Department, East Lansing, Michigan.