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News Release

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR CITES SMITHFIELD PACKAGED MEATS CORP. FOR FAILING TO PROTECT EMPLOYEES FROM CORONAVIRUS

SIOUX FALLS, SD – The U.S. Department of Labor’s Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has cited Smithfield Packaged Meats Corp. in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, for failing to protect employees from exposure to the coronavirus. OSHA proposed a penalty of \$13,494, the maximum allowed by law.

Based on a coronavirus-related inspection, OSHA cited the company for one violation of the general duty clause for failing to provide a workplace free from recognized hazards that can cause death or serious harm. At least 1,294 Smithfield workers contracted coronavirus, and four employees died from the virus in the spring of 2020.

“Employers must quickly implement appropriate measures to protect their workers’ safety and health,” said OSHA Sioux Falls Area Director Sheila Stanley. “Employers must meet their obligations and take the necessary actions to prevent the spread of coronavirus at their worksite.”

OSHA guidance details proactive measures employers can take to protect workers from the coronavirus, such as social distancing measures and the use of physical barriers, face shields and face coverings when employees are unable to physically distance at least 6 feet from each other. OSHA guidance also advises that employers should provide safety and health information through training, visual aids, and other means to communicate important safety warnings in a language their workers understand.

Smithfield has 15 business days from receipt of the citation and penalty to comply, request an informal conference with OSHA’s area director or contest the findings before the independent Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission.

Employers with questions on compliance with OSHA standards should contact their local OSHA office for guidance and assistance at 800-321-OSHA (6742). [OSHA’s coronavirus response webpage](#) offers extensive resources for addressing safety and health hazards during the evolving coronavirus pandemic.

Under the [Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970](#), employers are responsible for providing safe and healthful workplaces for their employees. OSHA’s role is to help ensure these conditions for America’s working men and women by setting and enforcing standards, and providing training, education and assistance. For more information, visit <https://www.osha.gov>.

The mission of the Department of Labor is to foster, promote and develop the welfare of the wage earners, job seekers and retirees of the United States; improve working conditions; advance opportunities for profitable employment; and assure work-related benefits and rights.

Agency: Occupational Safety & Health Administration

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