

On April 17th, 2020 20 elected officials of Black Hawk county Iowa signed a letter asking Tyson Fresh Meats hog processing plant located in Waterloo to voluntarily cease operations to allow for a proper evaluation of facilities compliance with federal CDC COVID-19 mitigation recommendations as well as various accounts from employees alleging unsafe working conditions. The direct employee and plant management quotes below as well as the official outbreak status at the Tyson Waterloo site lead to the belief that further investigation is needed.

Respectfully,

State Representative Ras Smith

Senator Bill Dotzler

State Representative Timi Brown-Powers

Senator Eric Giddens

State Representative Dave Williams

State Representative Bob Kressig

These accounts are recalled as the follow:

- Employee informs health care provider in Waterloo that they are in Waterloo working at the Tyson plant due to the closure of their home site in Columbus Junction. This individual would test positive for COVID-19 at a Waterloo testing facility
- Employee recounts that sufficient Personal Protective Equipment is not being provided by the employer
- Employee recounts that Tyson's has removed televisions from the breakrooms
- Employees recount that social distancing measures are only applied in the breakrooms, not on the operations floor or locker rooms
- Employees inform that nurse is unable to accurately conduct temperature checks and using insufficient device
- Tyson site management resist slowing production to adequately adjust to CDC best practices
- Due the diverse and multilingual nature of the employee population, ineffective communication has led to non-English speaking employees believing they can return to work while ill

Workers with chronic conditions:

"I have lupus and asthma, and so I was afraid I would die if I kept going to work. We work so closely together, and many people are getting sick. So yesterday I quit my job. I am so worried. I don't have health insurance now and I'm not sure how I can feed my children or pay rent. I am

the only one working. But I was afraid I would die if I kept going to work. Can you help me?" - Des Moines

Unfortunately, on March 19th, I started getting sick but I kept working for a week before seeing my provider. On March 27th, I went to urgent care and the provider treated me like I had Covid-19 even though they did not test me. Also, they gave a note to miss two weeks of work. After two weeks, I was not getting better. I still had a sore throat, coughing and headache. I saw my provider again a few days ago, they did not test me, and they said to go home and rest. The provider gave me another note to miss two weeks of work again. I am not sure how I can pay my rent and my bills. I am worried about getting my children food too. I am a single mother and I have three children under 18. I have been sick almost one month now. – Waterloo

"I have an existing condition and my father does too. He has tested positive for Coronavirus and I am really afraid of the worst." - Cedar Rapids

Workers who feel unsafe because of employee protocols:

"I was not feeling well for a week, but I still went to work because I didn't know if I was infected. I don't speak English and I am old enough to take care of myself. My daughter took me to test for COVID-19, and I tested positive. I have no clue how I got positive, because I was just going to work and come back home. That's all I've been doing everyday. Now I am in quarantine. Right now, I can't do anything. I'm so afraid of COVID-19 and I am not feeling better at all." – Waterloo

"I saw management put water in the hand sanitizer." – Waterloo

"They are bringing workers from sites that are shut down because of Coronavirus to my work."- Waterloo

"I work ten-hour shifts and only get a 15 minute break and 30 minute lunch break."- Waterloo

"I am tired and sick every day. I have to go to work because I don't want to be fired." - Waterloo

"A coworker vomited at work on the line and management let him continue to work and come back the next day."- Waterloo

"I am scared I will die because of work, but I need to work to buy food for my family."- Waterloo

"I can't stay home sick to protect my family because I don't want to be fired."- Waterloo

"We've never had so many people call in sick before. I know some people are calling in sick even though they aren't sick because they are afraid to come to work."- Plant Management

“ I don't feel safe at work because there are 8 people working in front of me, and another 10 or more behind me, and when I am in line to go to the break area there is no space and many people making big lines, also, in the locker room there is not enough space to change. I can't practice social distancing. I also asked my shift leaders about disinfecting the common areas more than just once a day.”- Cedar Rapids

“I can't practice social distancing, because of my work. There are a lot of people in front of me and beside me. They gave the workers an unsewing fabric mask. They offer a small bonus to keep the workers. They said the workers can call in [to take the day off] without getting a point, they also said that if they call in they will lose the bonus. Tyson did not care about the worker's health and safety; they only care about their business.”

- Waterloo

“I am enjoying working at Tyson because I don't speak English this place is perfect for me. But now I risk my life and my family life every day.”- Waterloo