

**Forest Inventory and Analysis Program**  
**COVID-19 Response Plan**

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## Summary: FIA 2020 season COVID-19 Response Plan

The Division of Forestry's Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) program works cooperatively with the USFS to implement Forest Service protocol to measure Alaska's forested lands. This summer we will have a crew of 20 DOF employees, 3 USFS personnel and a 2-4 person flight crew from Coastal Helicopters. Collectively we will create a team dedicated to measuring ~200 plots this season in the Susitna and the upper Kuskokwim watersheds. We will base out of Willow, AK, from June 25-July 27, Lake Minchumina from July 28-August 18, and McGrath from August 19-September 11 with the possibility of extension.

FIA is a program dependent on Federal, state and private partners working together. Ensuring that best management practices are adhered to and shared during a typical field season is a challenge. We recognize the additional protocols and mitigations required to protect crew, partners, and communities from COVID-19 is a potential area for confusion.

This document should be considered a supplement to the [DOF COVID 19 Handbook](#). The handbook has established Best Management practices for all Division of Forestry personnel. The Goal of this document is to identify risks and resources available to reduce the risk of COVID-19 unique to the FIA program.

It is intended to be used in tandem with FIA's other guiding policy documents including our wildlife, firearms, and project aviation safety plan.

We have separated our season into (3) distinct sections that each have their own inherent COVID 19 risks and resources.

1. Travel
  - a. DOF vehicle use in Fairbanks
  - b. DOF vehicle use transporting crew/gear to Willow Hub
  - c. Air travel to McGrath/Lake Minchumina
2. Training
  - a. Crew leader training (May 18-May 29)
  - b. Crew member training (June 1-June 19)
3. Field season/base of operations
  - a. Willow (6/25-7/27)
  - b. Lake Minchumina (7/28-8/18)
  - c. McGrath (8/19-9/11)

Taking into consideration our working relationships with federal and private partners, our considerable crew size (~27 personnel), our geographic spread of employees, and work locations throughout the state, we have tried to simplify our protocols and protection measures to be met by all partners and employees while still conducting a safe field season. We must achieve this goal while continuing to mitigate all risks associated with utilizing fixed wing and rotary aircraft to access our plots in remote locations throughout the interior.

### DOF Vehicle Use

- Assign specific vehicle to individual field crews
- Equip each vehicle with appropriate cleaning supplies
  - Diluted bleach spray
  - Antibacterial wipes
  - Hand sanitizer
  - Nitrite gloves
- Wear masks when occupying vehicle
- Refueling vehicles
  - Avoid entering gas stations (pay at pump)
  - Avoid using public restrooms
  - Use gloves when handling pump and payment keypad
  - Dispose of gloves when complete
- Wipe down all common hard surfaces when exiting vehicle

### Fixed Wing Flight Services

- Charter aircraft for FIA crew to Lake Minchumina and McGrath
- Direct air service from Fairbanks (no stops in Anchorage)
- Eliminate commercial scheduled flights
- Employees wear masks and have proper sanitizing cleaner to:
  - Wipe down surfaces in aircraft where seated
- All DOF/USFS/flight crew utilize same flight services
- Minimize air travel to and from hubs
  - 14-day hitches
  - Helicopter flight crew travel with DOF crew

## Helicopter Ops

- Flight crew disinfect interior of aircraft after daily flight ops
- Individually issued flight helmets per shift
- No face masks in helicopter
- Dedicated flight crew for 1<sup>st</sup> hub, Willow
- Once off the road system, each shift has a dedicated flight crew
- Shift schedules will reflect flight crew maximum duty schedule
- Flight crew will use PPE while refueling with commercially available fuel in Willow
- Flight crew will remain with aircraft or be on call at their designated lodging

## Fairbanks based Training (May 18-June 19)

### Fairbanks Based Training

Prior to our 80-day field season, our DOF crew members and crew leaders will participate in a pre-season training period based in Fairbanks. Crew leaders will officially be on board by May 18 and Crew Members on June 1.

These start dates reflect a 1-month delay of our season to identify and establish protocols to mitigate the risk posed by COVID-19 for our crews and communities that we will be interacting with throughout the 2020 season.

Our Fairbanks based training has been greatly modified from years past. We have canceled our medical and aviation training courses and extended qualifications when possible. Training will only consist of DOF employees, while our USFS partners work with us remotely from Anchorage to reduce travel and possible transmission.

The majority of training will be field based to avoid inside work environments where social distancing is not possible. These field-based trainings will be conducted by crew leaders in groups of 3-4 DOF employees, dividing our unit of 20 employees into the smallest modules possible while still maintaining the same training objectives.

#### Location:

DNR offices

3700 Airport way

Fairbanks Alaska, 99709

Local Health resources:

- Fairbanks Memorial Hospital – **COVID19 Medical Hotline, 907-458-2888.**
- Chief Andrew Isaac Health Center 451-6682 ext. 1
- Careline Crisis Intervention 877-266-HELP, or text “4 help” to 839863, [www.carelinealaska.com](http://www.carelinealaska.com)
- State of Alaska COVID information line – dial 2-1-1 or 800-478-2221, email [Alaska211@ak.org](mailto:Alaska211@ak.org)
- ASEA Health Benefits Trust (GGU)
- Teladoc 800-TELADOC, [www.teladoc.com](http://www.teladoc.com)
- Employee Assistance Program, Lifeworks at 877-234-5151, [www.lifeworks.com](http://www.lifeworks.com)

**On Boarding:**

- No physical paper copies
- Email employees all necessary paperwork to complete/e-sign and return
- If employees do not have capacity to e-sign they will be schedule on a staggered rotation to utilize DOF office space while maintaining social distancing and wearing masks, sanitizing commonly used computers, workspace etc.
- Prepared issued gear for all crew
- Increased issued gear to minimize exchanging common items
- Every employee will receive the DOF handbook as well as this document to become familiar with new protocols

**Crew Leader Training: (6 CL's, 3 coordinators = 9 total employees)**

May 18 – May 29

- Conduct training through telecommuting when possible
- Ensure all crew leaders have internet access
- Issue laptop computers
- Reimburse crew leaders for smart phone plan to facilitate remote comms
- Minimize congregating in DOF office
- Utilize DOF employee screening tool (see p. 11) whenever we need to use the office
- 1 week of remote telework consisting of:
  - 2 daily MS Teams/Zoom meetings
  - Self-paced protocol/leadership modules
- 1 week of field work entirely outside of DNR office

- Cert style measurement modules
  - Advanced practice plots
- Utilize DOF vehicles
  - 2 passengers per vehicle when travel is necessary
- Consider using personal vehicles to maintain social distancing if appropriate
- All Medical and in person Aviation training has been cancelled
- Crew leaders will complete all possible Aviation training via IAT to achieve the status of Flight Manager
  - Helicopter Manager course canceled
- Training period shortened by 2 weeks

**Crew Member Training:** (11 crew members, 6 crew leads, 3 overhead = 20 DOF employees)

June 1 – June 19

- Remote onboarding (no paper documents)
- When remote onboarding is unavailable, we will stagger CMs coming into the office to utilize DOF computers maintaining social distancing, wearing masks, and disinfecting commonly touched items
- Daily employee health screening utilizing the DOF employee screening tool
- Set up our 12x20 weather-port to provide more indoor space while greatly reducing traffic in the office
- Reserving conference room space to accommodate the added traffic while still minimizing the need for crew to access the DNR offices
- Keeping briefings split into shifts to reduce briefing size and maintain social distancing
- Shortened training period and canceled medical and in-person aviation training
- Majority of training will be crew leader-led and field-based to reduce gatherings
  - The field-based training will have protocol focus to ensure training objectives are met
- Assigned crew vehicles to reduce cross contamination
  - Follow all protocol outlined in the DOF handbook and as described above
- Assigned gear and measurement equipment that is typically shared so only one person touches tools per day while in training and will disinfect at the end of the day
- Issued masks and PPE
- Gear manager assignment:
  - 1-2 personnel responsible for storage and dispersal and inventory of all crew gear and shared group gear on a daily basis
  - Minimize traffic in our Conex and minimize how many people will touch gear
  - Gear Manager will wear PPE (gloves, masks, cleaning agents)

## Field Season Protocol Framework:

The mitigations used during the field season will be different than our Fairbanks based training. We intend to have the capacity to test our employees for COVID-19 prior to work in the field.

When we do arrive at our hubs, our crews will be not only working with one another but also living with one another. Since there will be little to no way to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 while we are at our hubs, we will consider ourselves a “family unit” isolating ourselves from our base communities.

We are extending our “hitches” for our crews to 14 days to minimize ground and air travel in and out of our hubs. This 14-day schedule will be synchronized with our flight crew so that we have a dedicated pilot and mechanic for each hitch.

With these extended hitches, each employee will have 1 light duty day while at their field hub location to minimize fatigue due to this extended schedule. Typical field days for crews are from 10-16 hours long, we will institute a “soft” cut off of 12 hours per day for employees whenever possible. If field work/data entry is left incomplete it is expected that crews will complete that work on their given “light duty” day.

## Travel to Willow via DOF vehicles (June 25):

**\*as of 5/11 the testing component of this plan is still TBD and dependent on local testing availability, this will be updated as details emerge**

- Test all employees before departing Fairbanks
- DOF health screening before leaving base
- Gear managers will pack all field, crew, and camp gear 72 hours before departure
- All vehicles are fueled prior to day of departure
  - Following fueling procedure outlined under vehicle use
- Crew assigned vehicles for drive
- No fuel or food stops to avoid public spaces and exposure
- One bathroom break at Chulitna rest stop
- One crew member will be assigned to refuel each vehicle once we have reached our destination



## Willow (June 25-July 27)

### Base of operations:

Alaska Heritage lodge  
11048 N Lakes O the Su Dr,  
Willow, AK 99688

### Local Health Resources:

#### **Sunshine Community Health Center**

Hours: Monday – Saturday, 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM  
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 1049, Willow, Alaska 99688  
Physical Address: 24091 Long Lake Road, Willow, Alaska  
Phone: 907 – 495 – 4100  
\*testing by appointment only

#### **Mat-Su Public Health Center**

3223 E Palmer-Wasilla Hwy  
#3 Wasilla, AK 99654  
Phone: 907 352 6600  
\*testing for anyone

## **Mitigations**

- Testing for 10 Fairbanks DOF based employees prior to travel
- Testing for 2 USFS personnel in Anchorage before travel
- Testing for 2 Coastal helicopter flight crew prior to travel
- Once we have been tested entire crew will minimize social interactions/contact with others outside of our program
- No restaurants/general store visits
  - Consolidate grocery trips if necessary
- Isolate crew at Alaska Heritage Lodge
- Contact private landowners via email and phone for access permission
  - No door knocking
- Utilize the DOF employee screening tool every morning at briefing
  - Temperature scan

- Exposure questions

## Lake Minchumina (July 28-August 18)

### Base of operations:

Green's Minchumina Getaway

Po box 49

Lake Minchumina, AK 99757

907-674-3155

### Local Health Resources:

N/A in Lake Minchumina

Contact health care providers in Fairbanks

### **Mitigations:**

- Employee testing prior to leaving
- Daily temp tracking and DOF screening tool
- Minimize travel to and from community with 14-day hitches
- Isolate crew and operations at the lodge
  - Only crew associated with FIA program at a lodge
  - Helipad at lodge
    - All passenger pick-up/drop-off to happen at lodge
  - Flight crew only members that utilize the airstrip to fuel heli
- If there is need to interact with community members DOF will wear appropriate PPE and practice social distancing

## McGrath (August 19-Sept. 11)

### Base of Operations:

Division of Forestry Base

Mcgrath, AK

Office phone: (907) 524 3010

Dispatch: (907) 524 3367

Local Health Resources:

McGrath Regional Health Center  
PO Box 10  
McGrath, AK 99627  
(907) 524 3299  
M-F 0800-1700

**Mitigations:**

- Test all crew before departing for McGrath
- Utilize DOF employee screening tool daily
  - Temp scan
  - Exposure questionnaire
- Isolate crews at DOF Base
  - Including USFS and flight crew
  - Minimize USFS presence to project essential personnel
  - No travel permitted into McGrath community
- If Fire personnel still present isolate FIA crews within DOF Base
- Notify McGrath Village council to our presence
- Coordinate with local officials when any community travel is necessary

**Division of Forestry COVID-19 Screening Tool**

1. Take temp with touchless thermometer
2. Do you have any of these symptoms
  - a. Today or in the past 24 hrs, have you had any of the following symptoms
3. Fever, felt feverish or had chills
4. Cough? Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing?
5. Muscle pain? Headache? Sore throat
6. New loss of taste and/or smell
7. In the past 14 days have you had contact with a person known to be infected with COVID-19

**If personnel is positive for any symptoms**

- a. Isolate individual

- b. Notify public health official
- c. Have individual transported as appropriate and outlined in the DOF COVID-19 handbook

## COVID-19 Exposure Precautions for Transport of Employees

Types of transportation:

1. Incident Medevac
2. Post-treatment transportation (Tested Negative for Covid-19) from hospital to mob center/airport/home/duty station
3. Confirmed COVID-19 exposure and/or positive Covid-19 test results

### Incident Medevac

Transportation for Urgent or Non-Urgent Medevacs from incidents will follow the standard process for declaring an emergency, reporting via the Medical Incident Report on the appropriate command channel. All patients will be assessed and treated on the incident as if they are a potential risk for COVID-19 Exposure, which will allow for the highest risk mitigation strategy. We don't have the ability to test employees for COVID-19 on the incident, so they will not be confirmed positive or negative in the field. Lack of testing must NOT delay treatment or transport for any patient. Appropriate safety and screening measures will be employed by all medical personnel on the incident to provide the highest level of protection to everyone involved. Suggested recommendations to follow to create a low-risk environment for potential exposure of others involved in Medevac:

- Keep at least six feet from the patient unless you are directly involved with patient care.
- Everyone that cannot keep a six-foot distance or will be in close quarters with the patient should wear a cloth or surgical face mask.
- The patient should also be wearing a face mask if possible.
- N95 masks are reserved for trained medical personnel only.
- Do not touch outside of mask or face as they are "dirty."
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water or hand sanitizer immediately following the transport.
- With proper PPE in place and effective risk mitigation, the risk for exposure remains low.

## Post-Treatment Transportation from hospital to mob center/airport/hotel/duty station

### (Tested negative for COVID-19)

When employees must be transported from an incident to a health care facility, and/or to a mob center/airport/hotel/duty station after treatment, they will be within 6 feet of the pilot or driver of a vehicle or aircraft. Absent symptoms of COVID-19, established PPE (face masks, eye protection and gloves) should be worn by pilots and drivers as feasible, according to CDC requirements and DOF policy. The patient should be wearing a cloth/surgical face mask if possible during the entire transport. The transportation process should be as follows:

- Wear appropriate PPE (face masks, gloves and eye protection).
- Do not touch outside of mask/goggles as they are “dirty.”
- Have patient sit in rear of vehicle if possible, with cross ventilation. Do not re-circulate air.
- Advise patient to perform hand hygiene, patient dons a clean face mask.
- Notify receiving health care facility/quarantine location point of contact.
- Clean and disinfect all high touch surfaces door, seatbelt, etc. after patient exits the vehicle.
- Remove gloves, perform hand hygiene. Put on new PPE if patient needs a return ride.
- Following patient transport: Perform disinfection of all transport vehicle surfaces and remove any contaminated waste and dispose of appropriately. Note: PPE should be worn during the disinfection process.

### Confirmed COVID-19 exposure and/or positive COVID-19 test results

If an employee on an incident has one or more of the following symptoms described in the DOF COVID- 19 Handbook in the Employee Screening Section 4, they should be isolated from the rest of the employees, and contact tracing should be initiated. Have them wear a facemask and minimize their contact with other personnel. Deliver meals and provide designated bathroom facilities for them.

Arrangements will be sought for an air ambulance or ground ambulance to transport symptomatic employees. If possible, this transport will be call-when-needed aircraft or ambulance, separate from the usual incident aircraft and vehicles.

If alternative transport is unavailable or not practical for symptomatic employees, agency medics and vehicles/aircraft may be used. PPE procedures should be followed as in the previous section with the addition of a Tyvek suit, and decontamination should follow contractual obligations for each vehicle or aircraft. These circumstances may occur after an employee has

tested positive, are experiencing minor symptoms, and need to be transported to a designated quarantine center or home.