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## Division of Forestry & Fire Protection

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### COVID-19 Workplace Operating Plan

April 1, 2022



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## Division of Forestry & Fire Protection

The following guidance shall be used by all Division of Forestry and Fire Protection (DOF) staff. This document will be updated as needed and as new guidance and direction is given from the State Emergency Operations Center and Governor's Office.

### Introduction

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The safety of our employees is our first and foremost priority. We want to ensure that all DOF employees are aware of the resources available to them as we work together to meet the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This manual is the DOF reference guide for memos, directives, and operational guidance related to health and safety of all employees during the COVID-19 pandemic. Updates will occur periodically and, where appropriate, will be incorporated into this manual.

We are working with our Management Team, the DNR Commissioner, the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), other interagency partners, and many of you to establish the final Best Management Practices and apply them consistently throughout the Division.

### Keeping the Workplace Safe

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Review State of Alaska COVID-19 Response and Recovery Health Advisory 1: [02.14.21-Health-Advisory-1-Recommendations.pdf \(alaska.gov\)](#)

Review State of Alaska Employee COVID Reminders and Updates: [EmployeeCOVIDRemindersAndUpdates.pdf \(alaska.gov\)](#)

Review the CDC guidelines at: [Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) | CDC](#)

Review OSHA/COVID rules at: <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/standards.html>.

### Vaccinations

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COVID-19 vaccinations are available for people that are age 5 or older.

<https://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/id/Pages/COVID-19/VaccineInfo.aspx>

[CDC's key things to know about COVID-19 vaccines.](#)



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## Benefits of COVID Vaccination

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Fully vaccinated means a person has received all recommended doses in their primary series of COVID-19 vaccine. Up to date means a person has received all recommended doses in their primary series COVID-19 vaccine, and a booster dose when eligible.

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## Can a supervisor ask me if I have been vaccinated?

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Yes, employees may be asked if they have been vaccinated, and the employee may voluntarily provide a response. Inquiring about vaccination status is not a disability related inquiry. However, the supervisor cannot ask why the employee has or has not received the vaccine. Regardless of the employee's vaccination status being known, or unknown it is the responsibility of the supervisor to ensure the health and safety of other employees in the workplace and practice mitigation and safety practices.

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## HIPAA

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Your employer asking you if you have a vaccine does not violate HIPAA. The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) is a federal law that required the creation of national standards to protect sensitive patient health information from being disclosed without the patient's consent or knowledge. Asking whether you have been vaccinated does not constitute sensitive patient health information; rather, it is a way to collect "information for the purpose of preventing or controlling disease..." (45 CFR § 164.512(b)(i))

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## Facilities Access

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State offices are fully open for business and must be reasonably accessible to the public. For security reasons, office buildings, shops and maintenance stations may have limited access. If your workplace is locked, make sure there is appropriate signage with phone numbers (monitored) for the public to call for assistance.

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## Recommended General Actions based on CDC Guidance

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- Isolating after encounter with someone who has been diagnosed with COVID (if you are not fully-vaccinated).
- Cleaning the workplace regularly.
- Cleaning and disinfecting the workplace if someone in the workplace has been diagnosed with COVID.
- Ensuring a system is in place for reporting incidents of exposure.



## Recommended Administrative Actions based on CDC Guidance

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- Managing staff working a combination of telecommuting agreements and personal leave.
- Facilitating staff telecommuting agreements.
- Developing and reviewing previous lessons learned from COVID-19 infection rates and mitigations factors that adhere to CDC guidance.
- Developing requirements for Emergency Contact lists, Continuing Operation Plans (COOP) and Employee Availability lists.
- Submitting required forms, timesheets, and documents online.

## Sanitization & Disinfection Best Practices per CDC

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The CDC states that the risk of virus spread from surface touch is low in most cases, and that the most reliable way to prevent infection spread from surface touch is through regular hand washing or sanitization. Normal routine cleaning with soap and water can help reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19 and other illnesses. Disinfection using EPA-approved disinfectants against COVID-19 can also help reduce risk if used after a known exposure in the workplace. When used, reference [EPA's List N, Disinfectants for Coronavirus](#), and [EPA's Six Steps for Safe & Effective Disinfectant Use](#). When EPA-approved disinfectants are not available, alternative disinfectants can be used (for example, 1/3 cup of bleach added to 1 gallon of water, or 70% alcohol solutions). Do not mix bleach or other cleaning and disinfectant products together, this can create hazardous fumes. Bleach solutions for use outside of medical-grade facilities are effective for disinfection up to two weeks, then should be discarded.

### Best Practices:

- Regularly clean all frequently touched surfaces in common areas and surfaces such as in vehicles or in personal or shared workspaces.
- If cleaning or disinfecting, give special attention to office, vehicle and heavy equipment electronics or other surfaces that may be damaged by these products. Avoid spraying any cleaning solution directly onto electronics or electronic controls.
- Keep common areas and office spaces clean and orderly. Do not leave trash in vehicles or any common area.



## Face Coverings (Masks)

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Masks will be provided for employees if requested. Masks are not required in state facilities, except as noted below:

- Masks are **REQUIRED** to be worn by DOF staff at airports regulated under 49 CFR 1542.103 and when traveling by commercial aircraft. These facilities are subject to a Federal [Executive Order](#) specific to [Transportation Hubs](#).
  - ⇒ Reference the TSA website for updates [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) information | Transportation Security Administration \(tsa.gov\)](#)
- Masks are **REQUIRED** to be worn by DOF staff who enter state facilities that are designated high-risk environments by the Governor's Office. Designated high-risk environments include patient care settings such as the regional public health centers and Alaska Psychiatric Institute. They also include congregate settings such as juvenile and adult correctional facilities and the Alaska Pioneer Homes.
- Cloth masks, or face coverings are not like PPE like surgical facemasks or N95 filtering facepieces respirators.
- Surgical masks (disposable masks) are not intended to be used more than once. If the mask is damaged or soiled, or if the breathing through the mask becomes difficult it should be removed and discarded. To safely discard a used mask, be sure to throw the mask away in a trash receptacle and then have the trash removed from the facility.
- DOF staff must adhere to any applicable local mandates that may require mask use. Such requirements do not apply to state-owned buildings or facilities (with the exception of applicable state-owned airports as noted above)
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>

## Personal Protective Equipment

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EFF and regular DOF employees should try to keep PPE, sanitizer and wipes with them, and bring them to their assignments; it is a personal responsibility to be prepared. In-state incidents will provide these items but there is no guarantee what will be supplied for out-of-state assignments. Be prepared and bring these items with you.



## In State Travel

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Staff should not travel if sick—even if illness is known not to be COVID-19.

- Staff traveling to communities in Alaska must adhere to local community requirements while in the community. More information about local restrictions is available here: [Safe Travel Community Restrictions App \(arcgis.com\)](#).
- Follow all airport and airline guidelines for mask use while in airport facilities.
- Follow good health and hygiene practices, i.e., frequent handwashing.
- If an employee exhibits symptoms of COVID-19 while in travel status, the site supervisor will isolate the employee immediately. If the employee is able to drive back to their residence on their own, have them return home as soon as possible. If air travel is required to transport the individual home, contact the [DOF Safety Officer or Medical Programs Coordinator](#) immediately for guidance.

## Interstate/ International Travel

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DOF Employees are advised to follow Health Advisory No. 2: [04.26.21-Health-Advisory-2-Interstate- and- International-Travel.pdf \(alaska.gov\)](#).

## If an Employee is Sick at Work

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- If there are people in the workplace who are sick and/or exhibiting COVID-like symptoms - have them cover their mouth and nose with whatever they have on hand and have them leave the location immediately or isolate them until they can return to their residence.
- Have them contact their health provider.
- Notify your supervisor.
- Close off areas used by the sick employee. If possible, open windows to increase air circulation in the area.
- Wear disposable gloves and masks for all tasks in the cleaning process including handling trash.
- Use appropriate materials to clean and sanitize the employee's workplace and any surfaces they may have come in contact with including offices, common areas, restrooms, and shared equipment like touchscreens, remote controls, etc.
- Once the area has been disinfected, it can be reopened. Staff without close contact with the sick employee can return to work immediately after disinfection.
- The individual must complete Employee Report of Occupational Injury form and submit according to division policy. Supervisors are responsible to ensure this happens and to arrange contact tracing if necessary. Contact the [DOF Safety Officer or Medical Programs Coordinator](#) immediately for guidance.



**If an Employee is Positive for COVID-19 or is a Close Contact**

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In the event an employee tests positive for COVID-19 or a workplace close contact, supervisors must contact the division safety officer or medical programs coordinator to initiate contact tracing as appropriate and for case specific recommendations. The table below defines circumstances in which **employees are prohibited from entering the workplace** and the requirements in order to return:

Employee Circumstance	Requirement to Return to the Workplace
Testing Positive for COVID-19	May return to work 5 days from first date of onset of symptoms or from date of test result (whichever occurred first), as long as employee is fit for duty and fever-free for at least a 24 hour period without fever reducing medications prior to returning to work.
Identified as a close contact with an individual testing positive for COVID-19	Completion of Quarantine (see below)
Calculating Isolation/ Quarantine	See calculating isolation below Day 0 – 5

Calculating Isolation: Day 0 is your first day of symptoms or a positive viral test. Day 1 is the first full day after your symptoms developed or your test specimen was collected. If you have COVID-19 or have symptoms, isolate for at least 5 days.

Close contact is defined as someone who has been within 6 feet of a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more within a 24-hour period. This requires quarantine unless:

- The individual exposed is fully vaccinated and remains asymptomatic.
  - ⇒ You do not need to stay home unless you develop symptoms.
  - ⇒ Avoid being around people who are at high risk
- The individual exposed has tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 90 days.





## Employee Screening

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- **Pre-Screen and Symptom Monitoring:** Employees should monitor their temperature and assess symptoms prior to starting work. Ideally, temperature checks should happen before the individual enters the facility. Continue self-monitoring for any symptoms of illness.
  - ⇒ Fever is defined as 38 °C / 100.4 °F (or higher).
  - ⇒ Sore Throat with associated fever.
  - ⇒ New Onset of Shortness of Breath or cough that is associated with other symptoms.
  - ⇒ New onset of body aches and pains that is associated with Influenza like illness or symptoms.
- **Wear a Mask:** The employee must wear a face mask at all times while in the workplace for 14 days after last exposure.
- **Social Distance:** The employee must maintain at least 6 feet of distance from others at all times
- **Disinfect and clean workspaces:** Disinfect all areas such as offices, bathrooms, common areas, and any shared equipment routinely. Every effort should be made to have employee avoid common spaces.

## Supervisors' authority to send home employees exhibiting flu-like or COVID-19 symptoms

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If the employee develops symptoms at any time during the 14-day period, they should be sent home immediately. Surfaces in their workspace must be cleaned and disinfected. Information on persons who may have had contact with the ill employee during the time the employee had symptoms and 2 days prior to symptoms should be compiled.

When a supervisor reasonably believes, based on objective evidence, that an employee is experiencing symptoms akin to COVID-19 (according to the CDC: fever, cough, and shortness of breath), the supervisor can send the employee home. The Department of Administration recommends supervisors document their observations and reasons for sending an employee home

## Quarantine Requirements

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When duties permit, employees will be allowed to telework from home during quarantine. Employees required to quarantine must take annual/personal leave (or authorized leave without pay if sufficient annual/personal leave is not available) for the duration of their quarantine period if they are unable to telework for any reason. Guidance for testing and quarantine is per DHSS guidelines dated August 11, 2021 found at: [AKCOVIDTestingGuidance \(alaska.gov\)](https://www.ak.gov/COVID-19/TestingGuidance) . Contact HR and/or a division safety officer for additional guidance.



See guidelines for quarantining and isolating for vaccinated and unvaccinated people that have been exposed to COVID-19: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/quarantine-isolation.html>

## Telework Environment

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Employees must submit a new [Telework Agreement form](#) to reflect the hybrid model. Approval must be received from their supervisor.

Plans will be implemented no later than 30 days after they are approved, finalized, and employees are notified of the final telework agreement. Please see the [Telework Policy](#) for specific information. Please note that Directors may require Employees or sections of Employees to return to the worksite in order to effectively manage its mission.

## Continuity of Operation Plans for Office Shutdowns

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In case of complete shutdown of an office due to multiple illnesses, Continuity of Operations Plans (COOPs) have been developed by all offices and sections.

Sign up for closure notifications here: [Office Closure Information and Links](#).

- **Phone or Email:** Receive notifications by phone or email when you sign-up or manage your [GovDelivery subscription](#) (select OFFICE CLOSURE list after login).
- **Web/Online:** Check [Alaska.gov](#) for alert notifications and updates.
- **Facebook:** On your home computer and with a person profile, sign up for the SOA Office Closure alerts on [Facebook](#) and/or [Twitter](#).
- **Hotline:** Check the State of Alaska Notification Hotline at [1-877-326-5551](tel:1-877-326-5551)
- (Please note that this telephone link is provided for smart phones and will likely generate an error on a land line.)
- **Nixle Alerts:** Simply text any zip code to 888777 and receive real-time alerts and advisories directly from your local police department and other local agencies.



## Online Resources

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**Division of Forestry:** An online resource link for employees can be accessed by buttons on the [DOF home page](#) called “COVID-19 Response Tools.”

[Division of Forestry on Facebook](#) and on [Twitter](#). DOF staff can also subscribe to [Alaska Fire Info](#), the interagency blog that is the main conduit for fire information for both the Alaska Division of Forestry and BLM Alaska Fire Service.

### Federal:

- [National Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\) FAQ](#)
- [CDC FAQ for wildland fire fighters](#)
- **State of Alaska (SOA):**
- [SOA Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) FAQ](#)
- [SOA Telecommuting Policy](#)
- More information can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/critical-workers/implementing-safety-practices.html>.

## Transport of Personnel with COVID-19 Exposure Precautions

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**NOTE:** Transportation of COVID-19 positive employee via MEDEVAC is referencing incident assigned employees only.

Transportation for Urgent or Non-Urgent Medevacs from incidents will follow the standard process for medevacs using the Medical Incident Report and requesting the appropriate transport based on the nature of the emergency.

### When planning medevac patient transport, consider the following options:

- Medical transport with pre-established contracts with the Division of Forestry
- Fire Department or ambulance services within their designated service areas.
- On-site transportation or with supplemental DOF transportation.
- If no safe transportation options are available, quarantine or shelter in place for cases of suspected COVID-19 exposure or flu-like symptoms.

### Categories of Transportation:

- Incident or within-Area medevac categorized by Medical Incident Report as Urgent (Red or Yellow) or Non-Urgent (Green).
- Suspected contagious (flu-like symptoms) or confirmed COVID-19 exposure.
- Post-treatment transportation from a care facility.



**Risk Mitigation Associated with all Medevacs:**

- All patients will be assessed and treated as if they are a potential risk for Covid-19 exposure to allow for risk mitigation strategy.
- Confirmed positive or negative in the field or lack of testing must NOT delay treatment or transport for any medevac patient.
- With proper PPE in place and effective risk mitigation, the risk for exposure remains low.

**Professional Services access and precautions:**

- A dedicated transportation plan for Medevacs should be in place. Consider a medical service helicopter, ambulance (if roadside), agency fire medics, and/or transport vehicle (SUV or Van) pre-established for medical transport.

**Patient Advocacy**

Employees being demobilized and in need of quarantine and/or isolation outside of the home unit will need logistical support for lodging, and meals during their quarantine and/or isolation. The Area will communicate with the home unit about how to compensate costs and ensure that support will be provided. Daily contact should be maintained to determine patient status