

**TO: All Employees**  
**FROM: Deputy Secretary Stephen Censky**  
**SUBJECT: Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Mitigation Guidelines**  
**DATE: March 5, 2020**

The COVID-19 outbreak is a rapidly changing situation. This memorandum serves as a reminder of the preventative measures that we each can follow as well as the actions that USDA is taking to keep you healthy and to protect your workplace. Consistent with [OPM guidance](#), USDA is providing these important guidelines that all employees and agencies are expected to follow.

### **Personnel**

1. **Employees should notify their supervisor and stay home if they are sick.** CDC recommends that employees who appear to have acute respiratory illness symptoms (i.e. cough, shortness of breath) with fever upon arrival to work or who become sick during the day should leave the workplace immediately. *If you are not feeling well, you should not be at work.*
  - a. Employees who have symptoms of acute respiratory illness with fever are recommended to stay home and not come to work until they are *free of fever* (100.4° F [37.8° C] or greater using an oral thermometer), signs of a fever, *and any other symptoms for at least 24 hours, without* the use of fever-reducing or other symptom-altering medicines (e.g. cough suppressants).
2. **Supervisors should monitor and take the following actions for employees returning from recent travel, foreign or domestic.**
  - a. Employees should notify their supervisors and take appropriate mitigation steps, including 14-day self-quarantine, if over the last 14 days they have traveled to countries or regions 1) during a time period that includes a Federal, state/tribal or local government acknowledged widespread, community outbreak of COVID-19 or 2) to which the Federal government has issued an active travel restriction or advisory, e.g., reconsider travel, travel not recommended, only essential travel or do not travel.
  - b. For the latest travel restrictions visit <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel.html> and travel health advisories <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>.

### **Hygiene & Health**

1. **Regularly perform routine cleaning of frequently touched surfaces.** Frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, include workstations, countertops, and doorknobs.
  - a. Use cleaning agents, including disposable wipes, that are normally used in these areas and follow the directions on the label.
  - b. OSHA guidance on workplace safety and health for Federal agencies and employees is available at [OSHA.gov/covid-19](https://www.osha.gov/covid-19).
  - c. Agencies should immediately make available and stock hand sanitizer, tissues and disposable wipes at all locations.
2. **Follow and reinforce respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene.**

- a. Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and clean your hands often with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60-95% alcohol.
- b. Always wash with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty, before and after eating, and after restroom visits.
- c. At the Headquarters (HQ), hand sanitizer stations are located throughout the complex. Do not move these strategically placed hand sanitizer stations from common areas to private offices.

## **Facilities**

1. **In General Services Administration (GSA)-controlled spaces**, GSA's Public Building Service (PBS) will procure and place hand sanitizers in entrances, cafeterias, and common areas.
  - a. GSA has requested that Agencies who operate fully delegated buildings take similar action with sanitizer in their facilities.
  - b. Agencies in GSA-controlled buildings are responsible for the procurement and placement of sanitizer in their own offices and work areas beyond the common spaces.
2. **In USDA-controlled spaces** (including delegated leased, owned, and occupied via agreement), agencies should adhere as closely as possible to the GSA guidance and action for GSA-controlled spaces. This includes requesting that the building owner/lessor place sanitizers in entrances, cafeterias and common areas.
  - a. In multi-tenant facilities that include non-USDA occupants, agencies should ensure these actions are taken in their occupied space to the maximum extent feasible.
3. OSHA guidance on workplace safety and health for Federal agencies and employees available at [OSHA.gov/covid-19](https://www.osha.gov/covid-19).

## **Missions & Programs**

1. **Carefully consider in-person meetings and business formalities.**
  - a. When scheduling meetings, agencies should determine if in-person meetings are necessary, including whether to bring visitors to USDA.
  - b. Non-essential, official travel should be reconsidered and must comply with USDA's COVID-19 travel guidance.
  - c. Ensure access to and encourage virtual meeting capabilities such as video and teleconferencing, and webinars.
  - d. If meeting in person, consider foregoing business formalities such as shaking hands and try to distance attendees six feet apart (i.e., social distancing).
2. **As a part of preparedness planning, agencies should review their Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP) to ensure that telework is fully incorporated and that employees are telework capable and telework ready.**
  - a. Employees in telework eligible positions should be prepared to telework if instructed to do so.
  - b. Agencies should test their telework readiness IT systems in the event further social distancing is required. The latest telework guidance is at [https://www.ocio.usda.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2012/DR%204080-811-002\\_Telework%20Program.pdf](https://www.ocio.usda.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2012/DR%204080-811-002_Telework%20Program.pdf).

**Please visit the Be Prepared Website for the latest Federal government information at <https://www.dm.usda.gov/beprepared/Covid19.htm>.**

If you have questions about this memorandum, please contact Jessica Fantinato ([Jessica.fantinato@usda.gov](mailto:Jessica.fantinato@usda.gov)), Director of the USDA Office of Homeland Security.