



COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan

USDA's mission is to provide critical services for curbing poverty and hunger, make credit available for rural development (where approximately 20% of Americans live), stabilize or improve domestic farm income, manage the integrity of critical natural resources, ensure the quality of food supplies, develop markets for agricultural products and services, and sustain the productivity of the Nation's forests, grasslands, and natural resources. Accordingly, this USDA Workplace Safety Plan was created in response to:

- Executive Order [13991](#), Protecting the Federal Workforce and Requiring Mask-Wearing (January 20, 2021);
- Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Memoranda [M-21-15](#) and [M-21-25](#); and
- Safer Federal Workforce Task Force [guidance](#), including the [updated Model Agency COVID-19 Safety Principles](#) (September 15, 2022).

USDA created this Workplace Safety Plan (Plan) to guide how Mission Areas, Agencies, and Staff Offices should implement COVID-19 safety protocols, consistent with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). As we have done since the start of the pandemic, USDA works to balance delivery of our critical missions with adapting to the everyday challenges that COVID-19 may present to the workforce. The health and safety of the USDA workforce, contractors, and the public is paramount. The Plan continues to be updated based on evolving guidance from CDC, General Services Administration, the Office of Personnel Management, and the Safer Federal Workforce Task Force (Task Force).

State, local, commonwealth, territorial, or Tribal governments, may provide guidance that differs from this Plan, but this Plan establishes the baseline Federal requirement, regardless of such guidance. Where a locality has imposed additional requirements related to COVID-19 that are more protective than those set forth in these model safety principles, those requirements must be followed in USDA facilities and on USDA land in that locality. USDA aims to be a partner in our communities to stop the spread of COVID-19.

Table of Contents

COVID-19 Coordination Team	3
COVID-19 Community Levels	3
Mask-Wearing.....	3
Vaccination for Employees, Contractor Employees, and Visitors, and Safety Protocols for Contractor Employees, Visitors, and Customers	5
Diagnostic Testing.....	6
Travel for Official Business	7
Symptom Screening	9
Post-Exposure Precautions	9
Isolation and Post-Isolation Precautions	10
Meetings, Conferences, and Events	11
Workplace Operations	11
Hygiene	12
Leased and Shared Facilities	12
Collective Bargaining Obligations	12
Confidentiality and Privacy.....	13
APPENDIX A.....	14

COVID-19 Coordination Team

USDA has an established COVID-19 Coordination Team. The team includes:

- Executive Leadership
- Public Health Experts
- Office of Human Resources Management
- Office of the General Counsel
- Representatives from Mission Areas and Staff Offices

The team meets to review agency COVID-19 workplace safety plans and protocols, consider potential revisions to agency COVID-19 workplace safety plans and protocols pursuant to guidance from the Task Force and the CDC, and evaluate any other operational needs related to COVID-19 workplace safety. The team coordinates with the Office of Operations which provides occupational safety and health for the National Capital Region, and the Office of Property and Environmental Management which oversees facility management across USDA. Through USDA's monthly Labor Management Forum, the Coordination Team engages regularly with USDA's national unions. The team also consults with USDA's Senior Agency Official for Privacy, as needed.

COVID-19 Hospital Admission Levels

The CDC has set recommendations related to [COVID-19 by County | CDC](#), which measure the impact of COVID-19 illness on health and healthcare systems. COVID-19 hospital admission levels are identified for each **county**. For each USDA facility, USDA uses the COVID-19 hospital admission levels in the county where the facility is located to determine the appropriate prevention strategies to utilize at a given time, including as it relates to mask-wearing. There are three COVID-19 hospital admission levels: LOW, MEDIUM and HIGH. If a USDA facility is in a county where the COVID-19 hospital admission level is **HIGH**, Agencies and Staff Offices may consider using available telework flexibilities for telework-eligible employees until the COVID-19 hospital admission level returns to **MEDIUM** or **LOW**.

The current COVID-19 hospital admission level designations are provided to employees on Thursdays in the USDA In a Minute messages to direct safety protocols for the following week (Monday through Sunday).

Mask-Wearing

When the COVID-19 hospital admission level is HIGH in a county where a USDA facility is located, pursuant to E.O. 13991 and consistent with CDC guidance, USDA requires individuals—including employees, contractors, and visitors—who are 2 years or older, to wear a high-quality mask or respirator indoors in the facility, regardless of their vaccination status. This includes when Federal employees are interacting with members of the public as part of their official USDA responsibilities. Respirators must meet U.S. or international standards (e.g., N-95, KN95, KF94) and masks must meet a standard (e.g., ASTM), or be "procedure" or "surgical"-style masks.

All individuals can choose to wear a mask or respirator when COVID-19 hospital admission levels are LOW or MEDIUM. If mask-wearing is required under more protective COVID-19 protocols established by Federal, State, Tribal, territorial, or local laws, rules, regulations, or existing collective bargaining agreements, those requirements are followed in USDA facilities.

Based on the COVID-19 hospital admission level, USDA facility mask-wearing protocols are as follows. These protocols apply regardless of vaccination status.

COVID-19 Hospital Admission Level	USDA Facility or Employee Worksite	USDA-Operated Vans, Cars, Trucks, and Other Motor Pool Passenger Vehicles with Multiple Occupants	USDA- operated, multiple-occupant Airplanes, Buses, Boats
LOW	Recommended	Recommended	Recommended
MEDIUM	Recommended	Recommended	Recommended
HIGH	Required when indoors	Required	Required

USDA posts and updates physical signs and posts information online on its agency websites, making clear what mask-wearing requirements apply in each USDA facility. When the COVID-19 hospital admission level is HIGH in a county where a USDA facility is located, physical signs are posted providing notice of the requirement for all individuals to wear a high-quality mask or respirator indoors in the facility pursuant to E.O. 13991. When the COVID-19 hospital admission level is LOW or MEDIUM in a county where a USDA facility is located, in most settings, USDA communicates to individuals, such as verbally or through signage, that mask-wearing is optional. USDA employees should make visitors and customers aware of the mask-wearing requirement when masking is required by the [Safer Federal Workforce Task Force guidance, and politely ask them to comply](#). If the visitor or customer refuses, which is their right, they must be directed to conduct business off-site (over the phone or online) and requested to depart the premises.

When required, masks or respirators must be worn consistently and properly (over mouth and nose) while inside all Federal buildings, while inside any office spaces leased by USDA or the Federal government, and while riding in USDA vehicles with other personnel. When mask-wearing is required, high-quality masks or respirators must be worn in common areas or shared workspaces (including open floorplan office space, cubicle embankments, conference rooms, and USDA vehicles). Individuals do not need to wear masks or respirators when outdoors; and limited exceptions to mask-wearing apply, such as when an individual is alone in an office with floor to ceiling walls and a closed door, or for a limited time when an individual is eating or drinking and maintaining distance from others. Masked individuals may be asked to lower their masks briefly for identification purposes in compliance with agency safety and security requirements.

Employees who perform official duties in more than one county must follow protocols for the county in which they are working. In other words, an employee is required to wear a high-quality mask or respirator while working in a facility or worksite in a county where the COVID-19 hospital admission level is **HIGH**, but that same employee is not required to wear a mask while working in a different facility or worksite on the same day in a county where the COVID-19 hospital admission level is **LOW** or **MEDIUM**. See sections below on **Post-Exposure Precautions** and on **Isolation and Post-Isolation Precautions** for additional mask-wearing requirements.

Employees who choose to wear a filtering facepiece respirator while in the workplace, in government vehicles, or engaging with the public as part of their official responsibilities need to review the information in Appendix A below regarding OSHA's Respiratory Protection Standard.

If any employee is unable to wear a mask or respirator properly, [CDC guidance](#) should be considered. Accommodations may be made for individuals in accordance with existing USDA and Equal Opportunity Employment Commission (EEOC) guidance.

Vaccination for Employees, Contractor Employees, and Visitors, and Safety Protocols for Contractor Employees, Visitors, and Customers

Vaccination for Employees

USDA continues to encourage everyone to be [up to date with COVID-19 vaccines](#).

Executive Order 14099, entitled *Moving Beyond COVID-19 Vaccination Requirements for Federal Workers*, revoked Executive Order 14043. Accordingly, USDA no longer has a vaccination requirement for its employees. Additionally, USDA is no longer enforcing any policies adopted to implement the federal employee vaccine mandate. Effective May 12, 2023, all prior USDA guidance implementing the federal employee vaccination requirements of Executive Order 14043 have also been revoked. Task Force guidance on other Federal agency safety protocols, such as mask wearing, remains in effect.

Leave Related to Vaccination

In most circumstances, USDA employees are authorized up to four hours of administrative leave to travel to the vaccination site, complete any vaccination dose or booster shot, and return to work. (i.e., up to eight hours of administrative leave for employees receiving two doses). If an employee needs to spend less time getting the vaccine, only the needed amount of administrative leave should be granted. Additional time may be granted for extenuating circumstances such as the distance to the vaccination site. Employees may only receive administrative leave during their normal work hours, should request and seek approval in advance, and may not receive administrative leave or overtime work for time spent getting a vaccine or booster shot outside their tour of duty.

Employees receive paid time off to address any side effects for the vaccination or booster. Administrative leave of up to two days is authorized if any employee has an adverse reaction to a COVID-19 vaccination dose that prevents the employee from working (i.e., no more than two workdays for reactions associated with a single dose). Employees should work with their supervisor and HR organization to change timesheets in accordance with this guidance and answer any specific questions the employee might have.

Employees also receive up to four hours of administrative leave per dose to accompany a family member being vaccinated. Employees should obtain advance approval from their supervisor before being permitted to use administrative leave to accompany a family member who is receiving a COVID-19 vaccination or booster shot. Employees are not credited with administrative leave or overtime work for time spent outside their tour of duty helping a family member get

vaccinated. For this purpose, a “family member” is an individual who meets the definition of that term in Office of Personnel Management (OPM) leave regulations (see 5 CFR 630.201).

Contractors

Executive Order 14099, entitled *Moving Beyond COVID-19 Vaccination Requirements for Federal Workers*, revoked Executive Order 14042, which had required certain parties contracting with the Federal Government to follow specified COVID-19 safety protocols including vaccination requirements. Effective May 12, 2023, USDA is no longer enforcing any prior guidance from the Safer Federal Workforce Task Force implementing the requirements of Executive Order 14042. Pursuant to the Executive Order, USDA will not take any steps to require covered contractors and subcontractors to come into compliance with previously issued Task Force guidance implementing Executive Order 14042 and will not enforce any existing contract clauses implementing Executive Order 14042.

Onsite contractor employees must comply with all relevant CDC guidance and safety protocols, including mask-wearing requirements. At this time, onsite contractor employees are not required to provide documentation of their vaccination status or documentation of a negative COVID-19 test result.

Visitors and Customers

A visitor is defined as anyone who is not a USDA employee or a contractor and includes categories such as: volunteers, retirees, people with appointments with the agency, and stakeholders.

Customers are defined as individuals entering a federal building, federally controlled indoor worksite, or federal land to obtain a public service or benefit.

Visitors and customers must comply with all relevant CDC guidance and safety protocols, including mask-wearing requirements. At this time, visitors and customers are not required to provide documentation of their vaccination status or documentation of a negative COVID-19 test result to enter a USDA facility.

Diagnostic Testing

[Diagnostic testing](#) is intended to identify current infection in individuals, including those individuals with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 or who are asymptomatic but are known to have been exposed to someone with COVID-19.

See section on **Post-Exposure Precautions** for information on required testing for asymptomatic employees who are known to have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 and who are onsite at a USDA workplace or interacting with members of the public in person as part of their official USDA responsibilities.

Federal employees with COVID-19 symptoms who may have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 at work may receive diagnostic testing at no cost to the employee. Agencies and Staff Offices should implement procedures to reimburse employees for any out-of-pocket costs.

Travel for Official Business

There are no Government-wide limits on official travel (i.e., travel conducted under an official travel authorization) for Federal employees. Individuals traveling on USDA official business:

- Are advised that CDC recommends that individuals make sure they are up to date with COVID-19 vaccines before travel;
- Should consider being tested for current infection with a viral test as close to the time of departure as possible (no more than 3 days) before travel;
- Must adhere strictly to CDC guidance for [domestic](#) and [international](#) travel before, during, and after official travel;
- Should check their destination's COVID-19 hospital admission level before traveling, and must wear a high-quality mask or respirator while on-duty and around others indoors at their destination, if the COVID-19 hospital admission level in the county where their destination is located is HIGH;
- Must understand and follow all travel restrictions put in place by State, Tribal, local, and territorial governments; and
- Should prepare to be flexible during their travel, as restrictions, policies, and circumstances may change during their travel.

Heads of USDA agencies will issue specific travel guidance as needed to account for the specific requirements of their agency's mission.

Travel for Individuals with Known Exposure

For asymptomatic individuals who have had a known [exposure](#) to someone with COVID-19 within the past 10 days, agencies may approve official travel, consistent with the agency's travel policy. If the individual remains without COVID-19 [symptoms](#) before traveling, then the individual must, in addition to other standard pre-travel instructions related to COVID-19:

- Wear a high-quality [mask or respirator](#) the entire time they are on-duty and around others indoors for the full duration of their travel that falls within the 10 full days after their last known exposure;
- Not travel on public transportation such as airplanes, buses, and trains if they will not be able to wear a high-quality mask or respirator when around others indoors for the full duration of their travel within the 10 full days after their last known exposure; and
- Follow other aspects of [post-exposure protocols](#) including the requirement for individuals with a known exposure to be tested for COVID-19 after 5 full days following their last known exposure (ideally, on or after day 6)—note that this testing may need to occur while the individual is traveling, and the individual does not need to wait for the results of this post-exposure diagnostic test to undertake official travel, including return travel. If the individual develops COVID-19 symptoms after official travel has been approved, then the individual must not undertake further official travel, including under that previously approved travel authorization, and must instead follow agency protocols for travel for individuals with COVID-19 symptoms (see next section).

Travel for Individuals with COVID-19 Symptoms or a Positive COVID-19 Test

Pursuant to E.O. 13991 and consistent with CDC guidance, agencies must not approve official

travel (i.e., travel conducted under an official travel authorization) for individuals who have COVID-19 symptoms and are waiting for an initial diagnostic viral test result. Also pursuant to E.O. 13991 and consistent with CDC guidance, agencies must not approve official travel, for individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19, for at least 5 full days after their first day of symptoms, or after the date of the initial positive diagnostic viral test for asymptomatic individuals.

If an individual who tested positive for COVID-19 has returned to working onsite at an agency workplace or interacting with members of the public as part of their official responsibilities (once they are fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication and their other symptoms are improving), then USDA may approve official travel for the individual. In this circumstance, the individual must, in addition to other standard pre-travel instructions related to COVID-19:

- Wear a high-quality [mask or respirator](#) the entire time they are on-duty and around others indoors for the full duration of their travel that falls within the period they are otherwise required to wear a high-quality mask or respirator after ending [isolation](#);
- Not travel on public transportation such as airplanes, buses, and trains if they will not be able to wear a high-quality mask or respirator when around others indoors for the full duration of their travel that falls within the period they are otherwise required to wear a high-quality mask or respirator after ending [isolation](#); and
- Follow other aspects of post-isolation protocols (see **Isolation and Post-Isolation Precautions** section below).

If after official travel has been approved, the individual's COVID-19 symptoms recur or worsen, then the individual must not undertake further official travel, including under any previously approved travel authorization, and must again not enter a USDA facility or interact with members of the public as part of their official USDA responsibilities, restarting at day 0 of isolation protocols (see **Isolation and Post-Isolation Precautions** section below).

If an employee has probable or confirmed COVID-19 during official travel, they must follow [isolation](#) protocols and not undertake further official travel, including return travel, for at least 5 full days after their first day of symptoms, or after the date of the initial positive diagnostic viral test for asymptomatic individuals. After that point, once the individual is fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication and their other symptoms are improving, they can proceed with undertaking further travel, including return travel. In this circumstance, the individual must, in addition to other standard pre-travel instructions related to COVID-19:

- Wear a high-quality [mask or respirator](#) the entire time they are on-duty and around others indoors for the full duration of their travel that falls within the period they are otherwise required to wear a high-quality mask or respirator after ending [isolation](#);
- Not travel on public transportation such as airplanes, buses, and trains if they will not be able to wear a high-quality mask or respirator when around others indoors for the full duration of their travel that falls within the period they are otherwise required to wear a high-quality mask or respirator after ending [isolation](#); and
- Follow other aspects of post-isolation protocols (see **Isolation and Post-Isolation Precautions** section below).

If at any point prior to their return travel the individual's COVID-19 symptoms recur or worsen, the individual must not undertake further official travel, including return travel, and must not

enter a USDA facility or interact with members of the public as part of their official USDA responsibilities, restarting at day 0 of [isolation](#) protocols.

USDA is responsible for all costs associated with travel and lodging expenses, as well as the cost of any diagnostic testing, in these circumstances. If the employee is unable to telework during this period because they are sick, then the employee should use leave consistent with USDA leave policies.

Symptom Screening

If USDA employees, onsite contractor employees, or visitors have fever or chills, or if they have other new or unexplained symptoms consistent with COVID-19 such as new or unexplained onset of cough, shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing, new or unexplained loss of taste or smell, or new or unexplained muscle aches, they should not enter the USDA workplace or worksite or interact with other employees or the public. If an individual suspects that they have COVID-19, such as because they have new or unexplained COVID-19 symptoms, but they do not yet have test results, they should not enter a Federal workplace and should get tested if they have not already done so.

To be consistent with Task Force guidance, USDA requires that all employees and contractor employees working onsite at a USDA workplace and all visitors to USDA facilities complete symptom screening before entering the workplace or facility.

USDA also requires that all employees complete symptom screening prior to interacting with members of the public in person as part of their official USDA responsibilities. Symptom screening can be self-conducted and does not need to be verified by USDA personnel.

An individual who develops fever, chills, or other new or unexplained symptoms consistent with COVID-19, or who tests positive for COVID-19, while onsite during the workday must immediately wear a high-quality mask or respirator and promptly leave the workplace.

Post-Exposure Precautions

Pursuant to E.O. 13991 and consistent with CDC guidance on [post-exposure precautions](#), individuals who are known to have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, regardless of their vaccination status, are required to:

- Wear a high-quality [mask or respirator](#) while indoors at a USDA workplace or interacting indoors with members of the public in person as part of their official USDA responsibilities as soon as possible after notification of exposure and continue to do so for 10 full days from the date they were last known to have been exposed;
- Take [extra precautions](#), such as avoiding crowding and physically distancing from others, when they know they are around people who are [more likely to get very sick from COVID-19](#) while onsite at a USDA workplace or interacting with members of the public in person as part of their official USDA responsibilities, for 10 full days from the date they were last known to have been exposed (for purposes of calculating the 10 full days, day 0 is the day of their last known exposure to someone with COVID-19, and day 1 is the first full day after their last known exposure); and
- Watch for [COVID-19 symptoms](#) for 10 full days from the date they were last known to have

been exposed (for purposes of calculating the 10 full days, day 0 is the day of their last known exposure to someone with COVID-19, and day 1 is the first full day after their last known exposure).

Employees and contractor employees who are known to have been exposed to COVID-19 and are onsite at a USDA workplace or interacting with members of the public in person as part of their official USDA responsibilities must be tested for current infection with a [viral test](#) at least 5 full days after their last known exposure (ideally, on or after day 6). The test can be both self-administered and self-read by the employee if the employee certifies as to when they took the test and that they received a negative result.

If the individual tests negative, then the individual must continue to follow the above precautions for 10 full days from the date they were last known to have been exposed. If they test positive, or if they at any time develop COVID-19 symptoms, they must follow department protocols on [isolation](#).

If the individual known to have been exposed to COVID-19 is not working onsite at a USDA agency workplace or interacting with members of the public in person as part of their official USDA responsibilities within 10 days of the known exposure, they are not required to be tested.

If the individual known to have been exposed to COVID-19 had tested positive for COVID-19 with a viral test within the previous 30 days and subsequently recovered, and remains without COVID-19 symptoms, they do not need to get tested after a known exposure. If the individual that had been known to be exposed to COVID-19 had tested positive for COVID-19 with a viral test within the previous 31-90 days and subsequently recovered, and remains without COVID-19 symptoms, then they should be tested using a viral antigen test. (See also: [CDC guidance](#).)

Isolation and Post-Isolation Precautions

Any individual (employee or contractor) with probable or confirmed COVID-19, regardless of their vaccination status, must not enter a USDA facility or interact with members of the public in person as part of their official USDA responsibilities, consistent with [CDC recommendations on isolation](#) and monitor their symptoms. This includes people who have an initial [positive viral test](#) for COVID-19, regardless of whether or not they have symptoms, and people with symptoms of COVID-19, including people who are awaiting test results or have not been tested.

Individuals who tested positive for COVID-19 and had [symptoms](#) can return to working onsite at a USDA workplace or interacting with members of the public as part of their official USDA responsibilities after 5 full days from the onset of symptoms (day 0 being the day of symptom onset), once they are fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication and their other symptoms are improving. Note that loss of taste and smell may persist for weeks or months after recovery and need not delay the end of isolation.

Individuals who tested positive for COVID-19 and never developed symptoms can return to working onsite at a USDA workplace or interacting with members of the public as part of their official USDA responsibilities after 5 full days following their positive COVID-19 test (day 0 being the day the individual was tested).

If an individual had moderate illness (if they experienced shortness of breath or had difficulty

breathing) or severe illness (they were hospitalized) due to COVID-19, or they have a weakened immune system, the individual should consult their healthcare provider before ending isolation. If an individual is unsure if their symptoms are moderate or severe or if they have a weakened immune system, the individual should talk to a healthcare provider for further guidance.

Post-Isolation Precautions

Once an individual has returned to working onsite at a USDA workplace or interacting with members of the public as part of their official USDA responsibilities after having tested positive for COVID-19 and isolated consistent with [CDC guidance on isolation](#), the individual must continue to take precautions consistent with CDC guidance for at least 10 full days after their first day of symptoms, or after the date of a positive viral test for asymptomatic individuals, including wearing a high-quality mask or respirator when around others, limiting time in crowded indoor public settings, avoiding eating and drinking around others, and avoiding being around people who they know are at [high risk for severe disease from COVID-19](#).

As it relates to ending mask-wearing after isolation, individuals may opt to take two viral antigen tests authorized by the FDA to detect current COVID-19 infection, starting on day 6. With two sequential negative tests 48 hours apart, the individual may remove their mask or respirator sooner than day 10. If either of their antigen test results are positive, the individual should continue taking antigen tests at least 48 hours apart until they have two sequential negative results. This may mean that the individual would continue wearing a high-quality mask and testing beyond day 10.

If at any point their COVID-19 symptoms recur or worsen, the individual must again not enter a Federal facility or interact with members of the public as part of their official responsibilities, restarting at day 0, consistent with E.O. 13991 and CDC recommendations on [isolation](#) and USDA safety protocols.

Meetings, Conferences, and Events

There are no Government-wide restrictions related to COVID-19 on hosting meetings, events, or conferences.

All in-person attendees at any meetings, conferences, or events hosted by USDA must comply with relevant COVID-19 safety protocols, including as it relates to any mask-wearing when COVID-19 hospital admission levels are HIGH, as further discussed in the **Mask-Wearing** section above.

Workplace Operations

Improving Ventilation and Air Filtration

To be consistent with Task Force guidance, USDA Agencies would need to make maintenance improvements to indoor ventilation and air filtration throughout Federal facilities to the maximum extent feasible, regardless of COVID-19 hospital admission levels. In consultation with occupational safety and facilities experts as appropriate, USDA evaluates making use of portable air cleaners with high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters in indoor common areas and meeting rooms, particularly where ventilation or air filtration is otherwise challenging to improve, where crowding cannot be avoided, or in high-risk settings.

Facilitating Physical Distancing and Avoiding Crowding

To be consistent with Task Force guidance, when COVID-19 hospital admission levels are MEDIUM or HIGH, USDA posts signage encouraging individuals, regardless of vaccination status, to consider avoiding crowding and physically distancing themselves from others in indoor common areas, meeting rooms, and high-risk settings in Federal facilities.

When COVID-19 hospital admission levels are MEDIUM or HIGH, agencies can consider establishing occupancy limits for indoor common areas and meeting rooms in USDA facilities, and in high-risk settings within Federal facilities, where necessary, including where ventilation and air filtration is challenging to improve, or crowding cannot otherwise be avoided.

Hygiene

Hand sanitizer stations should be available at USDA building entrances and throughout workspaces. Personnel are encouraged to wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer or alcohol-based hand rubs frequently. They are also encouraged to follow [Show Me the Science – When & How to Use Hand Sanitizer in Community Settings | Handwashing | CDC](#) on hand hygiene before eating, drinking, or smoking, and after using the restroom.

Leased and Shared Facilities

In a GSA-leased facility, the GSA facility manager is responsible for ensuring mask signage is prominently displayed when hospital admission levels are HIGH and that employees, visitors, contractors, and the public adhere to the mask requirement. Mission Areas who lease facilities outside of the GSA must review their lease agreements and determine responsibilities for communicating and enforcing the mask requirements.

In a shared facility with another Federal Department, the host agency's Workplace Safety Plan will be followed. If there are significant differences with the host agency and the USDA Workplace Safety Plan, Mission Areas and Agencies should elevate the concern to their Pandemic Coordinator.

Collective Bargaining Obligations

Consistent with President Biden's policy to support collective bargaining, Agencies are reminded to communicate regularly with union representatives and satisfy any applicable collective bargaining obligations under 5 U.S.C. Chapter 71 on COVID-19 workplace safety matters, to include implementation of this Plan.

Agencies may have collective bargaining obligations over the impact and implementation of this Plan and associated CDC guidelines. To that end, Agencies should engage with unions at their earliest opportunity as they adjust COVID-19 workplace safety plans, protocols, and policies, and otherwise satisfy any applicable collective bargaining obligations under the law, if any, including on a post-implementation basis, where appropriate.

Agencies should also review existing collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) to assess whether

updated COVID-19 workplace safety protocols conflict with existing CBA provisions. To the extent that conflicting CBA provisions exist, Agencies are strongly encouraged to bring CBAs into compliance with updated COVID-19 workplace safety protocols at the earliest opportunity permitted under the law. If Agencies determine these matters are already covered by an existing CBA and bargaining is not required, they will still need to satisfy their consultation obligations, as appropriate, under Section 2(c) of E.O. 13991.

Confidentiality and Privacy

All medical information collected from individuals, including vaccination information, test results, and any other information obtained as a result of testing and symptom monitoring, will be treated in accordance with applicable laws and policies on confidentiality and privacy, and will be accessible only to those with a need to know. Agencies should consult their Senior Agency Officials for Privacy on matters related to the collection and handling of personally identifiable information and identify a point of contact for all questions relating to personal medical information.

APPENDIX A

Information for Employees Using Respirators When Not Required Under the Standard

Respirators are an effective method of protection against designated hazards when properly selected and worn. Respirator use is encouraged, even when exposures are below the exposure limit, to provide an additional level of comfort and protection for workers. However, if a respirator is used improperly or not kept clean, the respirator itself can become a hazard to the worker.

Sometimes, workers may wear respirators to avoid exposures to hazards, even if the amount of hazardous substance does not exceed the limits set by OSHA standards. If your agency provides respirators for your voluntary use, or if you provide your own respirator, you need to take certain precautions to be sure that the respirator itself does not present a hazard.

You should do the following:

1. Read and heed all instructions provided by the manufacturer on use, maintenance, cleaning and care, and warnings regarding the respirator's limitations.
2. Choose respirators certified for use to protect against the contaminant of concern. NIOSH, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, certifies respirators. A label or statement of certification should appear on the respirator or respirator packaging. It will tell you what the respirator is designed for and how much it will protect you.
3. Do not wear your respirator into atmospheres containing contaminants against which your respirator is not designed to protect. For example, a respirator designed to filter dust particles will not protect you against gases, vapors, or very small solid particles of fumes or smoke.
4. Keep track of your respirator so that you do not mistakenly use someone else's respirator.

29 C.F.R. 1910.134.