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**Instructions for graduated reopening of Division of Agriculture offices, facilities, and research activities**

The Division of Agriculture will follow a graduated approach to reopening offices. These directions and our stages of progress are provided to align with each of the [three phases](https://www.whitehouse.gov/openingamerica/) set out by the White House. Our plan must remain flexible, as the likelihood of COVID-19 recurrence is unknown. Outlined below is what is required prior to returning and Stage I procedures. Stages II and III will be outlined and communicated in the coming weeks. These protocols will be continuously reviewed and revised to maximize effectiveness and safety. Protocols may change in response to the coronavirus influence.

A. **Prior to any employees returning to their workstation:**

1. All units will conduct a risk management assessment of each facility to document possible points of exposure and develop a plan to minimize employee/public exposure. Assessments should include a list of employees required on-site for this phase and justification for their on-site presence. Assessments should pay attention to personal areas, lab spaces, shops, etc., which aren’t included in the janitorial services contract. At a minimum, each unit will have a plan for:
   1. **Disinfecting:**
      * Comply with Centers for Disease Control (CDC) [disinfecting](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html) protocols for the worksite that address the need for thorough and frequent cleaning.
      * Ensure that compliance is documented.
      * Document how frequently disinfecting will take place.
   2. **Reducing Risks:**
      * Identify high-contact surfaces and mitigation methods to reduce risk of exposure.
      * Consider innovative ways to reduce handling of doorknobs/push-pull handles (all restrooms, etc.).
      * Direct users of shared office equipment, such as copiers, microwaves and refrigerators to wipe down touch spaces after each use.
      * Discourage shared/multiple users for keyboards, phones, and other workspaces or items where possible.
      * Identify vehicle use procedures to minimize potential points of exposure. [https://www.uaex.edu/life-skills-wellness/health/covid19/Farm\_Safety.aspx](https://nam05.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.uaex.edu%2Flife-skills-wellness%2Fhealth%2Fcovid19%2FFarm_Safety.aspx&data=02%7C01%7Cdlehigh%40uasys.edu%7Cf2274c754a3645e4503108d7edecac85%7C8c1a87cb80b7413f9ae855c6a5370604%7C1%7C0%7C637239474420262909&sdata=tmFet%2FKANLhHxqHNvhLryNulWlNzTly6gC5e5vIU%2BU8%3D&reserved=0).
      * Assess conference areas to determine how many can sit and be assured of proper social distancing. Post the maximum occupancy outside each conference room. Indicate where personnel may sit and still comply with social distancing rules.
   3. **Social Distancing:**
      * Document capacity of all workspaces based on current CDC social distancing guidelines.
      * Most of our current office/cubical configurations are already properly socially distanced. For any that are not, make proper accommodations to assure all employees are seated at least 6 feet from each other.
      * Hallways and staircases will be designated with one-way traffic flow to encourage 6-foot social distancing where possible. One-way locations must be identified by directions posted on the floor. In the case of an emergency evacuation, one-way directions should be suspended.
      * Employees will be required to wear masks when outside of their personal work area. (See separate policy detailing use of face masks.)
   4. **Restricting Breakrooms/Common Areas:** Assess the need to close / restrict access to areas where violation of social distancing requirements is most likely (i.e. entries, breakrooms).
      * Minimize the number of people who can eat at a table at the same time while maintaining social distancing. This may require employees to eat in shifts to maintain proper distance.
      * Employees may eat at their own desks, unless they are are in a lab or other area where food is prohibited.
      * Tape Xs on the floor in high-population areas of common areas, such as refrigerators and microwaves, to encourage social distancing.
2. These risk management assessments must be documented in a written plan and effectively communicated to the employees to ensure the implementation of risk mitigation actions.
3. Post the [self-assessment](https://app.box.com/s/74vqua1eq8guxr7nf47l8wi00vyavi36) [flowchart](https://division.uaex.edu/docs/5-20-2020-Self-assessment.pdf) on entrance door and any other doors that you feel are appropriate.
4. Post that masks are highly recommended for any visitors on entrance door.
5. Receive approval for risk management assessment plan by the appropriate District Director, Associate Vice President, or Senior Associate Vice President.
6. Implement mitigation measures outlined in the plan.
7. Provide appropriate aids, such a disinfectant, hand sanitizer, soap or masks, if available, to maintain sanitary conditions as recommended by the Arkansas Department of Health, ADH, and the CDC when employees return to work.

**B. Stage I: This stage of reopening will entail minimal employee presence and maximum flexibility in our facilities. This stage is characterized by employees at most locations continuing to work remotely. However, the Division of Agriculture will give consideration for requests by local governments to increase our employee presence while balancing our ability to ensure the safety of our employees and comply with CDC and ADH recommendations.**

1. **Each unit will be required to assess and document which employees are required to be on site, including justification.** Offices should continue to allow for working remotely where possible. Division of Agriculture employees who have successfully worked from home should continue to do so. Supervisors should consider the nature and necessity of work by identifying required on-site work(i.e., work that is not possible using work remotely methods, time sensitive, and critical to the mission of the Division). Supervisors and employees should discuss what qualifies as required on site work. **If you are deemed to be required on site, you must follow the guidelines below:**
   1. **Personal Health**:

Upon Supervisor approval of essential work status, we expect each of you to do your part by not returning to work if you have any of the following symptoms or exposures:

* + - * Fever higher than 100.4 °F.
      * Cold or flu-like symptoms in the last 14 days.
      * Or have traveled out of state within the past 14 days.
      * Complete a [self-assessment](https://division.uaex.edu/docs/5-20-2020-Self-assessment.pdf) to determine if you may return to work.

Supervisors should allow employees to return to work if they:

* Have not had a positive test or symptoms within the past 14 days,
* Have not had contact with positive/symptomatic persons within the past 14 days, and
* Have not had out-of-state travel within the last 14 days, this does not apply to employees who live out of state (in an adjacent state) and are just in their normal work commute.
  1. **Disinfecting:**
* Wipe down touch spaces such as copiers, microwaves and refrigerators after each use.
  1. **Personal Hygiene – Social Contact:**

It is essential that each of us do our part to maintain good hygiene and highly sanitary conditions. This includes:

* + - Washing hands frequently and properly.
    - Using hand sanitizers frequently, where soap and water is not immediately unavailable.
    - Avoid touching your mouth, nose or eyes and if you do, please follow the above protocol immediately.
  1. **Social Distancing:**

Shared offices or open space offices should be restricted or limited to physical distancing recommendations of at least 6 feet or more where possible. If social distancing cannot be achieved, discuss with your supervisor the potential for having only one employee working at a time or in shifts.

* + - * While moving about within the building maintain 6 feet between you and other workers. When passing by another co-worker please try to avoid making contact.
      * You are required to wear a mask when you are outside your personal work area or even if you are in your personal work area if you are interacting with the public (i.e. receptionists, county office administration, etc.)
      * If you cough or sneeze, please completely cover your face with your elbow.
      * Eating at your personal desk is acceptable, unless you are in a lab or otherwise prohibited area.
      * Each conference room has a maximum number of people posted on the outside of the door and seats will be marked where we expect the participants to sit to assure proper social distancing.
  1. **Medical Conditions:**

We are committed to the safety of our employees. Employees should always follow the medical advice prescribed by their doctor. Please contact Human Resources if you have concerns.

1. **Research Activities:**

For research activities, only essential and critical research activities should be

conducted at this time.

* 1. Definitions:
     1. Essential Research Activity: *Essential research activities include basic animal and plant care, maintenance of cell lines, and maintenance of equipment or building infrastructure that could not be shut down during a restriction on research.*
     2. Critical Research Activity: *Critical research activities are identified and prioritized at the Unit level, to be those activities with the greatest time and research productivity constraints. These can include but are not limited to, seasonal data collection such as field and agricultural work, experiments close to completion, or projects whose continued restriction or deferral would lead to catastrophic delay or loss of research results and subsequent success.*
  2. For PIs with laboratories on the Fayetteville campus, specific guidance from campus administration should be incorporated into the Unit’s risk assessment plan including the development of a research plan identifying tasks and key personnel, detailing specific tasks, establishing a work schedule for key personnel.
  3. **Key Preventative Measures for Laboratory Work:**
     + - Always maintain a 6-foot distance from other personnel.
       - Consider working in shifts to minimize personnel contact while ensuring lab/personal safety.
       - Wearing a mask is mandatory. Avoid touching your face.
       - Wearing gloves is recommended.
       - Frequent and thorough hand washing is mandatory.
  4. **Laboratory Cleaning and Disinfection:**
     + - Laboratories should be disinfected daily if in use.
       - Any area that is soiled or dirty should be cleaned with detergent and water before disinfection.
       - Use appropriate disinfectant on high-contact surfaces (doorknobs, light switches, tables, chairs, pens, computer keyboards, remotes, equipment lids, doors, on/off switches, knobs, handles, sinks, benchtops/counters, desks and cabinets).
       - Consideration should be given to using plastic wrap on sensitive surfaces to disinfect. Plastic should be discarded after each use.
       - Ensure all areas are covered thoroughly with the disinfecting solution and remain wet throughout the necessary contact time (follow manufacturer recommendation). Allow items to air dry before use.
       - All sanitizing material should be disposed of once disinfection is complete and the individual performing the sanitation should wash their hands.
       - For PIs conducting critical research requiring off-site travel, continue to follow the [Best Practices for Field Research](https://division.uaex.edu/docs/COVID%2019%20Prevention%20Best%20Practices%20for%20Field%20Research%20v2.0%200415020.pdf).

1. **Travel Restrictions:**

Minimize **non-essential work travel**, and employees traveling out of state (work or personal) should self-quarantine (via telecommuting) for 14 days upon return per CDC guidelines. The out of state travel restriction does not apply to employees who live in an adjacent state and the travel is their normal work commute.

1. **Schools and organized youth activities** such as 4-H that are currently closed, should remain closed or not resume at this time. This situation will be continuously assessed.
2. Continue to host **educational programs and meetings** using remote meeting options. Meetings of up to ten people may be held in person with approval of the Senior AVP if the risk assessment management plan has been approved, [ADH guidelines](https://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/programs-services/topics/novel-coronavirus) are followed, and appropriate social distancing can be accomplished.
3. **Visitor/Guest Protocol:**

* Each visitor/guest must complete a [self-assessment](https://division.uaex.edu/docs/5-20-2020-Self-assessment.pdf) prior to entering the offices.
* Visitors must review and agree to abide by these protocols.
* Masks are very highly recommended for all guests for the entire duration of their visit within the office space(s). This recommendation should be conveyed to visitors, if possible, before they come on site.
  + - * Keep a sign-in sheet, including name and date of each visitor/guest.

Resources:

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/openingamerica/>

ADH guidance for being tested: <https://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/programs-services/topics/covid-19-guidance-for-getting-tested>

ADH everyone should wear a face mask: <https://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/images/uploads/pdf/Face_covering.pdf>

ADH directive for summer camps (to be revisited May 31): <https://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/images/uploads/pdf/CampsDirectiveFinal4.17.20_.pdf>

CDC vulnerable populations: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/groups-at-higher-risk.html>

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