



Whatcom County Public Works COVID-19 Operating Plan

Purpose:

Whatcom County Public Works takes the health and safety of our employees very seriously. With the outbreak of COVID-19 we remain vigilant in mitigating its spread. The bulk of Public Works services are deemed “Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers” during this Declared National Emergency (<https://www.governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/WA%20Essential%20Critical%20Infrastructure%20Workers%20%28Final%29.pdf>). In order to be safe and maintain operations, we have developed this COVID-19 Operating Plan. Public Works will implement this plan throughout all our work locations and at all of our job sites to the extent feasible and appropriate.

This Plan is based on information available from the CDC, OSHA, Whatcom County Health Department, and Department of Labor and Industries at the time of its development, and is subject to change based on further information provided by these entities, and other public officials. Public Works may also amend this Plan based on operational needs.

It's important that we all respond responsibly and transparently to these health precautions. The Department will always treat private health and personal data with high confidentiality and sensitivity.

Scope:

This Plan applies to all employees who work for Whatcom County Public Works. The Plan consists of three parts. PART 1 contains general guidance for all employees, PART 2 pertains to the public spaces at the county offices/buildings where the public interface with the staff (i.e. front desks/counters, conference rooms, lobbies, etc.), and PART 3 pertains to employees working in the field, clarifying, exempting, and adding to the guidance of PART 1. Personnel will follow these requirements diligently, to carry out healthy and safe work throughout the County.

I. Responsibilities of Managers and Supervisors

- Familiarize yourself with this Plan in its entirety, educate employees under your purview and apply it to your area(s) of assignment.
- Follow this Plan at all times while ensuring the same from employees. You set the example by practicing good personal hygiene and jobsite safety practices to prevent the spread of the virus. Managers and supervisors will ensure that cleaning and disinfecting of high touch surfaces occur before and after all in-person meetings.
- Managers and supervisors are responsible for ensuring all employees review and answer the daily health screening questions (below in Part 1, B), and that appropriate actions are taken if ‘yes’ is answered to any of the questions.
- Managers will prepare, schedule and outline a plan to provide services in a phased re-open approach for their areas. In addition, managers will ensure signage and directional information is posted for the public.

II. Responsibilities of all Employees

All employees shall:

- Follow this Plan to the extent possible.
- Ensure, to the maximum practical extent, that our workplace remains free of COVID-19.
- Institute and follow various housekeeping, social distancing, and other best practices for field and office staff.
- Report to their managers or supervisors if they are experiencing signs or symptoms of COVID-19, as described below.

PART 1

A. Preventive Guidance & Symptoms

OSHA and the CDC have provided the following control and preventative guidance for all workers, regardless of exposure risk:

- Frequently wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. When soap and running water are unavailable, use an alcohol-based hand rub with at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Follow appropriate respiratory etiquette, which includes covering for coughs and sneezes.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

Employees must familiarize themselves with the symptoms of COVID-19. There is a wide range of symptoms reported, ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms may appear **2-14 days after exposure to the virus**. People with the following new and/or unattributed symptoms may have COVID-19:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

This list does not include all possible symptoms, however, the CDC will update this list at the link below as more is learned about COVID-19.

(<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>).

If you develop any of the symptoms above, **DO NOT GO TO WORK**. Call your supervisor and healthcare provider right away. Likewise, if you come into close contact with someone showing these symptoms, call your supervisor right away, isolate yourself and contact your healthcare provider.

B. Employee Daily Health Screening

All employees reporting to work will review the daily health screening listed below. If an employee answers 'yes' to any of the symptoms, either when asked by their supervisor or while self-reviewing, they must either stay home or leave work immediately.

Since your last day of work have you had any of the following symptoms:

- A fever of 100.4 degrees or higher?
- Chills or repeated shaking with chills?
- A cough that you cannot attribute to any other health condition?
- Shortness of breath that you cannot attribute to another health condition?
- A sore throat that you cannot attribute to another health condition?
- Muscle aches (myalgias) that you cannot attribute to another health condition or that may have been caused by a specific activity (such as physical exercise)?
- A headache that you cannot attribute to any other condition?
- A loss of sense of taste or smell?
- Fatigue?
- Congestion or runny nose that you can't attribute to another health condition?
- Nausea or vomiting?
- Diarrhea?

C. Workplace/Jobsite Exposure Situations

If the Department learns that an employee has tested positive, Public Works and/or the Health Department, will conduct a contact investigation to determine potential close contacts of the confirmed-positive employee (<https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/COVIDexposed.pdf>). If there are other employees identified as having close contact with the confirmed-positive employee in the prior 14 days, those individuals will be asked to self-quarantine for 14 days from the last date of close contact with that employee. If applicable, the Department(s) will also notify any subcontractors, vendors/suppliers, or visitors who may have had close contact with the confirmed-positive employee.

Recovery is defined as: (1) resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and (2) improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath).

- An employee who has COVID-19 symptoms and has not been in close contact with a confirmed-positive
 - Employees that have COVID-19 symptoms, even mild ones, should STAY HOME and notify their supervisor
 - Employees that have COVID-19 symptoms, even mild ones, should contact their healthcare provider and ask to get tested.
 - Employees should stay home and away from others until 24 hours after fever is gone AND symptoms are better AND it has been ten (10) days since the start of symptoms.
- An employee who tests positive for COVID-19 will be directed to self-quarantine away from work.

- Employees that test positive, **but have not had any symptoms**, may return to work when at least **ten (10)** days have passed since the date of his or her first positive test, and have not had a subsequent illness.
- Employees who test positive, **and have symptoms**, who are directed to care for themselves at home may return to work when:
 - **it's been at least 24 hours with no fever without using fever-reducing medication and;**
 - **your symptoms have improved and;**
 - at least **ten (10)** days have passed since symptoms first appeared.
- Employees who test positive and have been hospitalized may return to work when directed to do so by their medical care providers. The Department will require an employee to provide documentation clearing his or her return to work.
- An employee has close contact with an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19
 - When an employee learns that he or she has come into close contact with a confirmed-positive individual, he/she must alert a manager or supervisor of the close contact and self-quarantine for 14 days from the last date of close contact with that individual. Close contact is defined as within six (6) feet for 15 minutes or longer.
 - **If a close-contact employee wishes to return to the workplace for the duration of their quarantine period, then they may do so under a workplace quarantine arrangement and Director approval. This provision depends upon a reasonably attainable plan, at the County's discretion. Workplace quarantine requires a demonstration that the supervisor and employee will:**
 - **Prescreen before arriving** at the worksite, including verifying employee's temperature.
 - **Use face covering** at all times while at work.
 - **Wear gloves** in any shared environment.
 - **Maximize social distance.** The employee is assigned an activity that keeps them isolated until the end of their quarantine period, including in transition to and from the worksite or office. Where social distance rules cannot be guaranteed, barriers may be used if they do not interfere with safety. For example, Plexiglas shields between customers and workers in a reception area; between workers at adjacent work stations; single person to a vehicle where possible, etc.
 - **Disinfect and clean adjacent workspaces:** In addition to regular cleaning, additional disinfection should focus on high touch areas such as door handles, faucets, shared tools, etc. in the vicinity of the close-contact employee's workspace.
 - **Not share:** tools, headsets, phones, food or drinks.

D. General Safety Policies and Rules

- All existing Whatcom County Public Works policies and procedures remain in effect. See PART 2, public interface at the public buildings, and PART 3, the COVID-19 Operating Plan for Field Work for additional information.
- Whenever feasible, general in person interactions should be performed by phone or by electronic means (email, teleconference, video chat, texting, etc.). Whenever feasible, employees should use electronic or verbal means for business transactions to reduce the passing of hard copies and other materials (for example, purchase orders, invoices, etc.). During in-person meetings, avoid gatherings of more than 10 people with participants remaining at least six (6) feet apart. If attendance is required, the manager, supervisor, meeting lead, or designee will collect and sign in each attendee via verbal or digital confirmation.

- Any employee/contractor/visitor showing symptoms of COVID-19 will be asked to leave the office, jobsite or Public Works facility and return home.
- Employees must avoid physical contact with others and shall direct others (co-workers/contractors/visitors) to increase personal space to at least six (6) feet, where possible.
- Where work trailers are used, only necessary employees should enter the trailers and all employees should maintain social distancing while inside the trailers.
- Employees are encouraged to stagger breaks and lunches, if practicable, to reduce the size of any group at any one time to less than ten (10) people.
- Where feasible, employees are encouraged to work with their manager to consider staggered shifts or alternating crews, alternative work scheduled and/or work from home arrangements.
- Employees are to assess their work space. This includes considering proximity of desk locations to ensure distancing. Managers and employees will evaluate and consider relocating work spaces to allow adequate physical distancing.

E. Personal Protective Equipment

- Personal protective equipment will be used and provided in accordance with WCPW policies and procedures.
- Employees are required to wear face coverings over their noses and mouths except when working alone in an office, vehicle, or at a job site, or when the job has no in-person interaction. Face coverings are required outdoors in public locations when physical distancing of approximately six feet from another individual who does not share their household cannot be maintained.
- The CDC recommends wearing hand-sewn face masks, or equivalent mask in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain (e.g., grocery stores and pharmacies). Individuals should be careful not to touch their eyes, nose, and mouth when removing their face covering and wash hands immediately after removing.

F. Routine Workplace Cleaning and Disinfecting

Routine cleaning and disinfecting are an important part of reducing the risk of exposure to COVID-19. Normal routine cleaning with soap and water alone can reduce risk of exposure and is a necessary step before you disinfect dirty surfaces.

- Surfaces frequently touched by multiple people, such as door handles, desks, phones, light switches, and faucets, should be cleaned and disinfected at least daily. More frequent cleaning and disinfection may be required based on level of use. For example, certain surfaces and objects in public spaces should be cleaned and disinfected before each use.
- The Department has instituted regular housekeeping practices, which include cleaning and disinfecting frequently used tools and equipment, and other elements of the work environment, where possible. Employees should regularly do the same in their assigned work areas. To the extent tools must be shared,

- the Department will provide alcohol-based wipes to clean tools before and after use. When cleaning tools and equipment, consult manufacturing recommendations for proper cleaning techniques and restrictions.
- Employees must wash their hands before and after entering an office or work site and frequently throughout the day. Hand washing supplies, hand sanitizer, and/or sanitizing wipes will be available onsite, when access to running water may be impracticable.

G. General & Questions

Employees having specific questions about this Plan or COVID-19 should ask their manager or supervisor. If the manager or supervisor cannot answer the question, route the questions to the Safety and Training Specialist, Billie Sue Rinn at (360)778-6228 or email brinn@co.whatcom.wa.us.

Given the fast-developing nature of the COVID-19 outbreak, the Department may modify this Plan as necessary.

Additional information can be found here:

Whatcom County Human Resources

<https://www.whatcomcounty.us/3376/COVID-19-Resources-for-Employees>

Whatcom County Health Department

www.whatcomcovid.com

<https://www.whatcomcounty.us/3329/Novel-Coronavirus-COVID-19>

Washington State Department of Health

<https://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/Coronavirus>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

Washington Department of Labor & Industries (L&I)

<https://lni.wa.gov/forms-publications/F414-164-000.pdf>

https://www.lni.wa.gov/agency/_docs/wacoronavirushazardconsiderationemployers.pdf

OSHA

www.osha.gov

PART 2

This part of the plan provides guidance on physical distancing as it pertains to the public spaces at the county offices/building where the public interface with the staff (front desks/counters, conference rooms, lobbies, etc.). Rollout of PART 2 is phased in conjunction with the changes in levels of social distancing, as per the Governor's order for re-opening the economy.

Staged physical distancing plan for public interface:

- LEVEL 1: Low risk businesses resume (construction, etc.)
 - Lobbies/doors remain closed.
 - Interaction continues remotely (telephone and online).
 - Focus on critical business and backlog work issues.
 - Make sure vehicles are equipped to meet protocols for interaction (i.e. inspection).
- LEVEL 2: Public Counters Re-open (restricted use)
 - Face to face interaction is by appointment only - PPE worn by customer & staff
 - Increased sanitization of public counters, doors and other high touch areas.
 - All visitors sign in on Visitor's Log.
 - Where feasible, place a table on public side of counter to keep customer back 6 feet or install Plexiglas guards (check with facilities on this).
- LEVEL 3: Public Counters (limited hours)
 - Open a few hours each day
 - Limit number of customers in the door at any one time.
 - Each facility will determine the maximum number of customers allowed in the space(s) at any one time.
 - All customers enter through the designated door and exit through the designated exit (these may be the same).
 - Maintain 6 foot social distancing marks on sidewalk/paths/etc. leading up to office/buildings entrances
 - Post applicable signage explaining protocols, number of people allowed in at a time, etc.
 - When inside the public spaces, social distancing marks will be maintained on the floors.
 - When interacting, customer and staff will wear PPE
 - PPE will be provided for customers who do not have their own
 - All visitors sign in on Visitor's Log
 - Where feasible, place a table on public side of counter to keep customer back 6 feet or install Plexiglas guards (check with facilities on this).
 - Increased sanitization of public counters, doors and other high touch areas
- LEVEL 4: Public Counter Opens (regular hours)
 - Hours of operation will vary by location (approximately 8:30-4:30)
 - Limit number of customers in the door at any one time.
 - Each facility will determine the maximum number of customers allowed in the space(s) at any one time.
 - When interacting, customer and staff will wear PPE
 - PPE will be provided for customers who do not have their own
 - Maintain 6 foot social distancing marks on sidewalk/paths/etc. leading up to office/buildings entrances
 - Post applicable signage explaining protocols, number of people allowed in at a time, etc.
 - When inside the public spaces, social distancing marks will be maintained on the floors.
 - All visitors sign in on Visitor's Log
 - Where feasible, place a table on public side of counter to keep customer back 6 feet or install Plexiglas guards (check with facilities on this).
 - Increased sanitization of public counters, doors and other high touch areas
- LEVEL 5: Public Counter Opens
 - Full Pre-COVID Opening

- No PPE or social distancing restrictions

PART 3

This part of the plan applies to typical field activities including inspection, maintenance, operations, and construction work for WCPW employees. It either adds to the instructions in PART 1 of this plan or provides for exemption in order to maintain employee safety. For quick reference, a condensed Field Work COVID-19 Operating Plan shall be available at all job sites.

A. Preventive Guidance & Symptoms

See PART 1.

B. Employee Daily Health Screening

In addition to PART 1, employees will perform daily tailgate safety meetings with crew to identify potential social distancing concerns as well as PPE required for daily activities.

C. Workplace/Jobsite Exposure Situations

See PART 1.

D. General Safety Policies and Rules

In exemption to PART 1:

- In general, employees should use separate vehicles. If safety circumstances require, employees may ride in the same vehicle. Employees riding in the same vehicle together will adhere to the following:
 - Wipe down touch surfaces before entering vehicle or wear gloves in the vehicle.
 - Wear a face mask for the duration of the trip.
 - Use hand sanitizer/wash hands regularly.
 - Whenever possible, try to keep the same people together in vehicles.
 - Whenever possible and safe, try to minimize time spent together in a vehicle.
 - Do not use the recirculated air feature for the vehicle HVAC system.

In addition to PART 1:

- Due to the risk of contact with the public, consider bringing enough food and water with you to work for the duration of your daily work schedule.

E. Personal Protective Equipment

See PART 1.

F. Routine Workplace Cleaning and Disinfecting

In addition to PART 1, Safety Data Sheets (SDS) of all mixed disinfectants must be kept on the job site (if applicable).

H. Job Site Personnel & Visitors

- Access to job sites will be limited to only those necessary for the work.
- When approached by unscreened employees, contractors, vendors, visitors, or members of the public, ask the screening questions listed above in Section B. *Employee Daily Health Screening*. If someone replies ‘yes’, inform them that you cannot interact with them in person, and you can provide them with the special programs manager contact information to follow up with.
- For office visitors, the same daily health screening questions will be posted by the front door of each Public Works building. Upon entry, staff should ask visitors if they answered ‘yes’ to any of the screening questions. If someone replies ‘yes’, they must be told to exit the building immediately.
- All staff must coordinate with their potential visitors to make them aware of our screening questions and policies.
- Screening questions will be posted on the Whatcom County Public Works website.
- Site deliveries, by both outside vendors and employees, will be permitted but should be properly coordinated in line with the employer’s minimal contact and cleaning protocols.

G. General & Questions

See PART 1.