



United States Department of the Interior
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington DC 20240

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Memorandum

To: Solicitor
Inspector General
Assistant Secretaries
Bureau and Office Heads

From: Gregory Shelton
Acting Director, Office of Emergency Management

Subject: DOI Coronavirus (COVID-19) Guidance -- Memorandum #1

Background:

International public health authorities including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are continuing to closely monitor developments around the coronavirus (COVID-19) first identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China that is expanding in China and now internationally, impacting an increasing number of countries. In the coming days and weeks, we expect more confirmed cases in the United States (US), including more person-to-person spread. The goal of the current aggressive public health response is to prevent spread of this virus in the community in the US. The COVID-19 outbreak has been named a public health emergency of international concern and declared a public health emergency in the US. Any US citizen returning to the US from Hubei province will be subject to a 14 day quarantine, while other Americans who traveled elsewhere in China will be instructed to self-monitor for possible symptoms. Isolation and quarantine guidance will continue to be updated as the outbreak continues to evolve.

Key Points:

- CDC considers this to be a very serious public health threat; however, based on current information, the immediate health risk within the US is considered low at this time.
- While instances of person-to-person spread between close contacts has been detected in the US, this virus is NOT currently spreading throughout US communities.
- It is currently flu and respiratory disease season and if you are experiencing symptoms, there is a very low likelihood that the symptoms are caused by the COVID-19.
- Medical and public health experts across the Federal government are working to understand the virus, identify routes of exposure, and limit its spread in coordination with international partners.

- DOI is actively involved in supporting the US response and is developing department-wide guidance in collaboration with the bureaus.
- The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has released additional guidance to assist agencies and employees in responding to any concerns about exposure to the COVID-19.

Guidance for all DOI employees:

Stay informed using trusted sources – CDC is updating its website daily with the latest information and advice for the public. (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>) The CDC does NOT currently recommend the use of facemasks or other respiratory protection for the general public. However, everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of viruses are advised, including:

- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Stay home when sick and avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Cover cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Get the flu vaccine, if you have not already received it this season.
- If you are experiencing symptoms such as cough, fever, shortness of breath, follow up with your healthcare provider and be sure to mention any recent travel.

Strategies to reduce the spread of the Coronavirus

We understand the recent recommendations – including avoiding travel to China and the quarantine of U.S. citizens returning from Wuhan – is concerning. The actions the Federal government is taking are science-based with the aim of protecting the health and safety of all Americans.

This is an emerging, rapidly evolving situation and there is much more to learn about this virus. DOI's Office of Occupational Safety and Health, in conjunction with the Office of Emergency Management and the NPS Office of Public Health are closely monitoring this situation and will continue to provide guidance to DOI employees as it becomes available.

The DOI Pandemic Plan outlines multiple strategies (listed below) that may be implemented to protect the health and safety of personnel and continue to meet the DOI mission within a pandemic environment. These strategies can be implemented in conjunction with one another or independently based on the circumstances and the nature of the task being performed.

While implementation of these strategies is not necessary at this time, all leadership to include supervisors/managers, are encouraged to understand the strategies that are available. Supervisors/managers should begin conceptualizing how to implement these strategies to ensure the continuation of all essential functions should the viral outbreak necessitate further active protections for DOI employees, contractors, partners, and the public.

DOI Pandemic Plan Strategies:

- Social Distancing
- Vaccination and anti-viral medications once available
- Personal protective equipment
- Telework, leave, and other human resource flexibilities
- Reduction of services provided to the public to reduce the congregation of large groups in an area, to include closure of DOI lands to the public when warranted.

Human Resources Flexibilities:

The Department is committed to minimizing the impact of the virus on our employees while continuing to ensure the continuity of operations. Bureaus/Offices are encouraged to utilize available human resources (HR) flexibilities, along with providing workplace accommodations, as appropriate, to support employees who have a significant risk of a severe outcome due to contracting the coronavirus.

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has released additional guidance (<https://www.chcoc.gov/sites/default/files/Coronavirus%20Memo%20Attachment.pdf>) to assist agencies and employees in responding to any concerns about exposure to the COVID-19. The OPM guidance provides information on various HR flexibilities that agencies and employees may use during periods when employees are subject to quarantine or isolation in connection with COVID-19. For questions regarding these HR flexibilities, employees may contact their servicing Human Resources Office for additional information.

Guidance for DOI employees in travel status:

- CDC has developed specific guidance for travelers, <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/warning/novel-coronavirus-china>, to China, and also maintains general travel health notices <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices>.
- Closely monitor Travel.state.gov for important foreign travel information.
- Specifically, the Department of State has issued a “Do Not Travel” advisory for China.

Guidance for DOI Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and first responders:

CDC has established interim guidance for all first responders, including law enforcement, fire services, emergency medical services, and emergency management officials, who anticipate close contact with persons with confirmed or possible COVID-19 in the course of their work at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-for-ems.html>.

- DOI first responders and EMS providers should use standard, contact, and airborne precautions, including eye protection.
- Patients/individuals at risk should wear surgical masks if showing symptoms.
- A flowchart that demonstrates how to identify and assess patients who may be ill or may have been exposed to COVID-19 can be found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/2019-nCoV-identify-assess-flowchart-508.pdf>

Reference/For more information:

- DOI Interior Operations Center Common Operating Picture: <https://arcg.is/1Xq8O8> (If prompted, select "AD" when clicking the link above.)
- DOI Pandemic Influenza Plan: <https://www.doi.gov/emergency/emergency-policy>
- HHS-CDC Information: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/summary.html>
- OSHA Information: https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/novel_coronavirus/index.html
- World Health Organization Information:
<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>