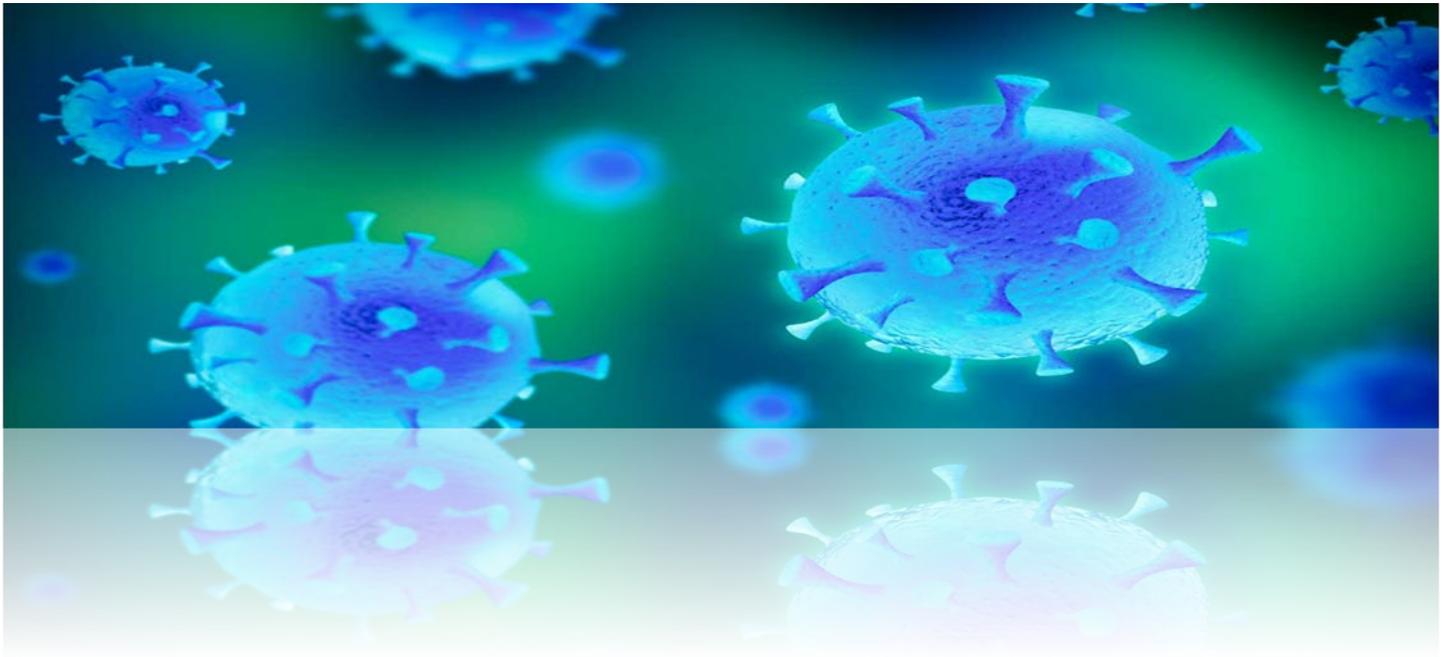


United States Department of Agriculture
Farm Production and Conservation Mission Area
(FPAC)



FPAC COVID WORKPLACE SAFETY SOP

This document supplements the USDA Workplace Safety Plan (dated October 25, 2021)

Version 7 – November 2, 2021

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Summary

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) supersedes the previous FPAC guidance that was issued in April 2021 and will govern all FPAC facilities and employees.

The [USDA Workplace Safety Plan](#) serves as the basis for this SOP and shall be followed unless further clarified in this document.

FPAC will continue to use the established Incident Management Team as the clearinghouse for all facility staffing requests and will depend on State and Hub Pandemic Coordinators to evaluate local conditions and collaborate with all FPAC agencies and other collocated Federal agencies.

The FPAC Pandemic Incident Commander will coordinate assignments of FPAC staffing to the USDA COVID-19 Coordination Team through the FPAC Incident Management Team, to assure appropriate levels of representation, expertise and decision-making support and enhance FPAC unity of efforts for workplace safety.

The authoritative sources that will inform State and local Pandemic Coordinators on community spread will be the [FPAC COVID Dashboard](#) and the [CDC COVID Data Tracker](#). Local leaders must consult these tools when applying this SOP; local use of additional data sources should be coordinated with the FPAC Pandemic Incident Commander. The Vaccine Verification Dashboard data also may provide additional COVID-19 related information about workplace safety and mission assurance trends.

This guidance will take precedence if a state government imposes pandemic-related requirements less protective than USDA's guidance.

FPAC Facility Staffing Process

1. FPAC's Office Staffing Process follows USDA and CDC guidance.
2. Until Reentry begins, FPAC Headquarters, Hubs and States Offices will operate with not more than 25% of normal occupancy standards at any one time.
3. In order to complete mission critical work, Service Centers and NRCS Plant Material Centers and Soil Laboratories will operate under the following guidelines and data from the [FPAC COVID Dashboard](#):
 - a. Below 5 cases per 10,000 residents per day: 75% staffing with visitors by appointment
 - b. 5-10 cases per day: 50% staffing with visitors by appointment
 - c. If Above 10 cases per 10,000 residents per day: 25% occupancy and no visitors
 - i. These counties must drop by 50% to return to 50% staffing.
 - ii. FPAC facilities that would only be allowed 1 employee under the 25% rule, may have 2 employees in the office if physical distancing permits.
 - iii. NRCS Plant Material Centers and Soil Laboratories may have sufficient staffing to complete required work, providing all work is conducted outdoors with masks and physical distancing. Up to 25% of total staff may work inside the facility unless the criteria below are met.
 - d. All facility status changes will be made and distributed by the FPAC Incident Management Team every Monday.
 - e. Staffing levels cannot exceed to number of people possible with physical distancing.

Additional Guidance for all FPAC Facilities:

- FPAC facilities must provide that the minimum 6 ft physical distancing can be maintained under all circumstances. If multiple agencies are located in the facility and their offices are separated by walls or on different floors, each agency may operate at the authorized strength indicated above. If multiple agencies are in a single space, they must coordinate staffing levels.
 - The number and on-site positioning of employees returning to work must be determined based on the ability to follow all Social Hygiene and Cleaning Protocols including the use of appropriate PPE.
 - This number is intended as a maximum, not a goal. Leaders at Hub locations, State Offices, Service Centers, and Regional Offices will assess the maximum daily capacity based on the building occupancy standard and the ability to physically separate employees within the facility.
 - In locations with multiple agencies, the SFAC Chair or Hub Coordinator must coordinate to provide assurance an equitable distribution of employees allowed in the office across all agencies within a single physical space.
 - Partner agency employees must be counted in the total number of people allowed in the office.
 - Where office space is provided for County Committee members and FSA and NRCS District Directors, and SWCD employees, they may be included in the number used to calculate the 25% total.
- FPAC Agencies should prioritize the return of employees and contractors whose work does not permit telework, are deemed mission-critical, or are customer-facing. Agencies co-located with another USDA agency or federal department need to coordinate facility capacity and maximum physical distancing.
- [High-risk](#) individuals as defined by the CDC who have self-certified may request a Reasonable Accommodation and should be allowed to continue maximum telework flexibility.
- Consistent child and dependent care, and mass transit availability should be factored into the decision of requiring employees to return to the office.
- Leaders should consider establishing a team approach or staggered work schedule that would place a group in the office, while another is on telework.
- Visitors are permitted by appointment. Office Doors should remain locked, and producers should be notified that office staff will not allow entry until their appointment is available.
 - Anyone who has legitimate, official business (i.e., customers) or does not need to follow the Vaccination mandate (including Religious or Reasonable Accommodations) should be considered a “Visitor” when determining a requirement to follow COVID-19 safety protocols.
 - USDA employees needing access to FPAC facilities are not considered visitors. If they are remaining at the facility for more than just a brief stop, they must be included in the staffing percentages.
 - Facilities with approval to operate LincPass stations may admit customers for the purpose of obtaining a LincPass but must adhere to FPAC safety protocols for these appointments.
- Conference rooms and other common facilities should only be used for critical, time sensitive meetings and other events that cannot be performed virtually but where physical distancing and masking are maintained.

- Appropriate [signage](#) must be posted as stated in the Workplace Safety Plan.
- Only mission essential, time sensitive business travel will be considered. (This does not preclude NRCS and FSA field work, and RMA field staff and their associated contractors including Approved Insurance Providers’ agents and loss adjustors. with proper social distancing). Any local requirements for quarantining upon return from travel should be followed.
- All potential new COVID exposures must follow the guidance in the Exposure Risk Matrix (Appendix A) and must be reported immediately via [FPAC COVID Reporting Tool](#) or FPAC-COVID19@usda.gov (if access to the ServiceNow tool is unavailable). New COVID cases or exposure in the facility, or significant change in the community may require the facility to return to differ FPAC COVID Condition.
- **Vaccinated FPAC employees who are exposed to COVID-19 must quarantine for 7 days with a negative test or 10 days without a test.**
 - Fully vaccinated people should continue to take precautions in public and follow guidance from employers, and CDC and health department travel recommendations when:
 - Visiting unvaccinated people at increased risk for severe COVID-19
 - Visiting unvaccinated people from multiple households

Indicator	
Percentage of Workforce allowed in the office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Until Reentry begins, FPAC Headquarters, Hubs and States Offices will operate with not more than 25% of employees in the office at any one time. • Service Centers, Plant Material Centers, Soil Laboratories <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If Above 10 cases per 10,000 residents per day: 25% and no visitors ○ 5-10 cases per 10,000 residents per day: 50% staffing with visitors by appointment ○ Below 5 cases per 10,000 residents per day: 75% staffing with visitors by appointment
Telework	As possible to meet mission requirements
Masks	Must be available to all employees. Required at all times unless in an office with floor to ceiling walls and a closed door, briefly while eating or drinking, alone in a USDA vehicle, or while performing field work outdoors and physically distanced.
At Risk Employees	Employees defined as high risk by CDC may request a Reasonable Accommodation
Travel	Mission essential, time sensitive travel only
Customers	Permitted by appointment only USDA customers that have essential business that needs to be conducted but cannot be done virtually may utilize FSA drop boxes, drive through windows, or other similar means to conduct essential business. Producers should not enter USDA facilities but, brief stops may be conducted in USDA parking lots to allow for staff to obtain necessary signatures and paperwork. Masks must be worn by all parties when conducting business and should only occur if the stop is less than 15 minutes
Meetings	Virtual is recommended, in person employee meetings must include masks and cannot exceed the number of people permitted by physical distancing
Office Cleaning	Very frequent, daily if possible, with spot cleaning of frequently touched surfaces throughout the day

FPAC Travel Guidance

- Travel must be mission essential and time critical. Mission essential, time sensitive travel is defined as overnight travel to support operational matters that cannot be conducted remotely or deferred to a later date.
- Field work, including repair of FPAC IT equipment, is authorized provided mask, physical distancing and proper hygiene practices are followed. Field work requiring visits to FPAC facilities must be coordinated with the County Executive Director and/or District Conservationist prior to the visit.
- In-person training does not meet the criteria of mission essential, time sensitive travel unless it is required to maintain a certification that enables an employee to complete their duties, and the certifying body has not granted extensions or remote opportunities. All in person certification training should be approved by State and/or Headquarters leadership prior to any individual attending the training.
- Conferences and large gatherings (more than 50 people) present a high-risk situation at this time and do not meet the definition of mission essential, time sensitive travel and will be avoided.
- More than one person may occupy a Government vehicle, but masks must be worn, and it is recommended that windows be left partially open if possible. The interior of the vehicle should be cleaned at the beginning and end of use and if the driver changes.
- Travel request will be submitted through state, hub, or RMA leadership for decision.

Overnight Travel	Local Travel/Field Work	Local Training	Large Gatherings
Overnight travel that cannot be deferred must be approved at the State or HQ level.	Work that cannot be deferred is permitted. All precautions must be followed. Mission delivery field work will continue following appropriate precautions.	Conducting or attending group training is not permitted.	In person attendance at conferences and trade shows is not permitted.

Appendix A

Exposure Response Matrix

If an FPAC facility has an exposure after beginning the reopening process, this matrix will be followed to determine immediate actions.

