



U.S. Department of Justice
Office of the Deputy Attorney General

The Deputy Attorney General

Washington, D.C. 20530

January 26, 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE EMPLOYEES

FROM: THE ACTING DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL *JPL 1-26-21*

SUBJECT: Protecting the Federal Workforce and Additional Guidance Regarding
Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

On behalf of the acting Department leadership, I want to thank you for your ongoing service during the pandemic. We recognize that the pandemic has brought unparalleled challenges. Many of you have shouldered additional responsibilities caring for loved ones, community members, and families – all while working tirelessly in support of the Department's critical mission. As the country continues to respond to COVID-19, we want to emphasize our commitment to protecting your health and safety, and to supporting you during these challenging times.

Last week, President Biden issued an Executive Order¹ setting forth a policy to halt the spread of COVID-19 by relying on the best available data and science-based public health measures. This Order requires departments and agencies to comply with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines regarding wearing masks, maintaining physical distance, and following other recommended public health measures.

As part of our effort to curb the spread of COVID-19, we must limit the possibility of close contacts (defined as being within 6 feet of a COVID-19 positive individual for a cumulative total of 15 minutes over the course of a 24-hour period) to protect our employees, principals, and larger community. Thus, all on-duty or on-site Federal employees; on-site Federal contractors; and all persons in Federal buildings or on Federal lands must, in accordance with CDC guidelines:

- Always wear a mask (neck gaiters, bandanas, and masks with valves will not be permitted), including in common areas, shared workspaces, and conference rooms. Masks may only be removed when alone in an office with a closed door, or when eating or drinking and maintaining at least 8-10 feet of distance from others.
- Keep physical distance of at least 6 feet from others, *even with a mask on*.
- Conduct meetings virtually where possible.

¹ Executive Order on Protecting the Federal Workforce and Requiring Mask-Wearing, January 20, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/20/executive-order-protecting-the-federal-workforce-and-requiring-mask-wearing/>.

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- Wash hands or use hand sanitizer frequently.

All Department employees should also continue to telework where operationally feasible. On-site work should generally be limited to situations in which it is necessary – e.g., law enforcement functions essential to public health and safety, accessing classified material, or performing critical on-site support functions. Even when an individual must report to work in-person, efforts must be made to minimize face-to-face interactions, including through the use of virtual meeting platforms.

The Justice Management Division will issue additional guidance in the coming days regarding the Department's safety plan, new required symptom screenings for on-site employees, and measures to reduce occupancy in Department workplaces, consistent with operational needs. We will also keep you updated as the situation evolves, including as we refine and implement our vaccination plan.

In addition to these safety measures, we encourage all supervisors to remain flexible as we navigate this pandemic. We must continue to accomplish our critical mission while accommodating those who, among other things, are, or are living with, members of a vulnerable population; those who are caregivers; and those who are reliant on the safety or availability of public transportation.

While we look forward to meeting in-person again soon, your health and safety, and that of our communities, is of paramount importance during these times. To all whose jobs have required or will require them to be on-site, thank you for your willingness to do so in support of our critical mission. And to everyone, thank you for your commitment to the Department and your tireless work during this challenging period. We appreciate your service to our nation, and all you are doing to keep each other and your communities safe.