



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
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Memorandum

To: All DOI Employees in the National Capital Region (NCR)

From: Scott J. Cameron
Acting Assistant Secretary
for Policy, Management and Budget

Subject: Transitioning the DOI National Capital Region workforce back to the workplace

This memorandum provides additional detail following up on the Deputy Secretary's recent communication to DOI employees in the National Capital Region (NCR). In line with the District of Columbia and neighboring jurisdictions in Virginia and Maryland, the Department of the Interior's NCR workforce is currently in Phase 2 as defined by the COVID-19 Adaptive Operations Recovery Plans for each Bureau, the Solicitor's Office and the Office of the Assistant Secretary, Policy, Management and Budget (PMB).

Now that we are in Phase 2 of the pandemic response in the NCR, here is information to assist our DOI workforce with this transition.

Telework and Flexibilities

In Phase 2, DOI employees in the NCR will transition from a maximum telework posture to one where telework should continue to be encouraged where feasible consistent with operational needs. Supervisors should ensure that all telework eligible employees are telework ready and provide flexibilities for individual employees based on supervisor discretion.

Bureaus and offices should begin bringing employees back to office spaces to better satisfy operational needs. Supervisors should work with employees who share offices to ensure that no more than one person is present in that space on a given day if having more than one person present would preclude maintaining social distance of 6 feet. Similarly, supervisors should manage daily attendance in open work environments where employees are not separated by walls or floor to ceiling partitions, so employees who are present are able to maintain six feet physical distance.

If work can be performed more effectively in a telework posture, supervisors and employees should continue in that capacity to enhance mission delivery. Supervisors should work with their Servicing Human Resource Offices to understand the flexibilities afforded to them based on their local policies. References include: [Fact Sheet: The Use of a Maxiflex Work Schedule in Response to Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#) and [U.S. Office of Personnel Management](#)

[Guidance on the Use of Alternative Work Schedules During Metro's Platform Improvement Project.](#)

Vulnerable Persons

As articulated in my May 22, 2020, memo, during Phase 2, supervisors are to continue to maximize telework flexibilities for workers whose conditions the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has identified as being [at higher risk for serious complications from COVID-19 or who the CDC identifies as special populations](#), including pregnant women.

Transportation Considerations

In making decisions about individual employees teleworking or returning to office locations during Phase 2, supervisors should be mindful of an employee's ability to have reasonable access to public transportation if that is the employee's normal way to commute. For example, given the current Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) closures, the [U.S. Office of Personnel Management \(OPM\) is strongly encouraging agencies to allow affected employees in the Washington, DC, area to utilize various workplace flexibilities throughout the WMATA project](#), including telework and alternative work schedules. Additionally, Bureaus should explore providing more employees with parking at their place of work, redistribute existing parking and/or leverage any existing shuttle contracts as tools for moving employees from regional parking hubs to office locations.

Weather & Safety Leave

Use of Weather & Safety Leave (administrative leave code 061) **is no longer eligible** except for employees that the CDC has classified as a high risk/vulnerable population.

Excused Absence for Caregivers

Supervisors may continue to grant employees with childcare and/or dependent care responsibilities affected by COVID-19 up to 20 hours per pay period of excused absence (administrative leave code 060) to the extent they cannot complete their tour of duty through telework and/or work at the regular worksite until children in the associated schools and facilities return to physical learning locations.

Occupational Safety and Health

As employees start returning to their workspaces during Phase 2, the following are safety and health recommendations for supervisors:

- Encourage employees to follow the current CDC guidance to monitor for symptoms of and potential exposure to the COVID-19 virus, and use the [CDC Self-Checker daily prior to entering the workplace](#)

- Recommend the use of cloth face coverings when other physical distancing measures are difficult to maintain. The Department is working to distribute one cloth face covering for each full-time government employee. Employees who normally work in the Main Interior Building (MIB) and do not receive a cloth face covering when they get to their office should contact their office POC listed on the [Office of Facilities and Administrative Services \(OFAS\) website](#) or their Bureau management. At NCR locations outside of the MIB, employees should contact their Bureau management for details on the cloth face covering distribution.
- Encourage employees to self-monitor for symptom development during the workday. Employees who become sick during the day should immediately be asked to separate from others, provided a cloth face covering if they are not using one, and go home and follow-up with their health care professional. Supervisors should familiarize themselves with the [COVID-19 decision matrix](#).
- Physically separate employees by maximizing spacing between employees in common work areas and in meetings in conference rooms to ensure a minimum of 6 feet separation.
- Encourage frequent hand washing. Individual offices may provide hand sanitizer and sanitizing wipes for use in locations with frequently touched surfaces within offices. Facility managers should provide supplies for general communal areas outside of the office.
- Encourage employees to complete the DOI Talent [COVID-19 Safety and Health Awareness training](#).
- Inform employees of the [DOI Employees COVID-19 Information Portal](#) for additional information.

Main Interior Building Services

In Phase 2, the MIB will continue to be open with all entrances and parking garages accessible, including the Federal Reserve Building garage. Additional operational status information is as follows:

- Consistent with guidance from our medical professionals, standard office cleaning is continuing on normal schedules with additional sanitization of communal areas conducted daily. Any area occupied by a person determined to be COVID-19 positive will be closed for at least 24 hours before being sanitized per CDC [guidance](#) and [GSA Cleaning and Disinfection Procedures](#).
- The Auditorium and all communal conference rooms are available for use for DOI employees only. Microsoft Teams and other virtual meeting capabilities should continue to be used whenever feasible. Recommended capacities for each communal conference room are posted outside the rooms and can be found on the [OFAS website](#). Physical distancing of 6 feet by all meeting participants is recommended. Supplies have been provided to sanitize the spaces before and after meetings.

- The Wellness Center will be open for appointments only during Phase 2. Appointments can be coordinated through the MIB nurse at 202-345-5639 or barbara_hayden@ios.doi.gov. Walk-ins will commence in Phase 3.
- The Bison Bistro will remain closed during Phase 2 until the daily occupancy of the MIB reaches 1000 people per day, which is not expected to occur until a few weeks after Phase 2 commences. Once open, and for the duration of Phase 2, the Bison Bistro will only have grab and go items. OFAS is currently negotiating with the Randolph Shepherd Snack Bar vendor on the fourth floor of the MIB to increase food offerings and products once Phase 2 commences. Expanded offerings may be available during Phase 3 when the building population exceeds 1500 people per day.
- The 4th Floor Snack Bar will be open 24/7, with some expanded offerings, but limited to 4 patrons at a time to maintain physical distancing. Patrons are expected to wear cloth face coverings while in the Snack Bar.
- The Bright Horizons Child Care Center will remain closed during Phase 2. Parents requiring service during Phase 2 should continue to work with the Bright Horizons staff to secure placement at other local Bright Horizon feeder centers. It is anticipated the MIB center will likely open in Phase 3 when sufficient patronage is expected.
- The Interior Department Recreation Association's (IDRA's) Gymnasium will be open in Phase 2 for all members, with social distancing measures in place.
- The Interior Federal Credit Union will be open for normal business in Phase 2.
- IDRA Post Office, IDRA Gift Store and Hair Salon will remain closed until Phase 3.
- The Indian Craft Store will remain closed until Phase 3.

For the latest status on all MIB facility services, or to ask questions, please visit the [OFAS website](#).

Communications

It is appropriate for supervisors to consider various forms of group communications, such as all-employee emails, Teams meetings, and town halls to orient employees to the changes in the workplace as they start coming back to the office. Please continue to ensure that the content of these communications is coordinated with Bureau Communications contacts and the Departmental Communications Office.

Finally, all DOI employees are encouraged to review the guidance on the [Return to the Workplace Tab](#) of the DOI COVID-19 Information Portal, which is updated frequently. Employees who need additional assistance or are encountering difficult challenges during this time are encouraged to reach out to their supervisors and/or Interior's Employee Assistance Program, [ESPYR](#).

Thank you again for keeping the Department's many missions on track during this ongoing pandemic. You continue to perform in exceptional ways during unusual circumstances. We look forward to welcoming you back as it is safe to do so.