



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Deputy Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

TO: Subcabinet, Chief Operating Officers, Chief Human Capital Officers
FROM: Deputy Secretary Stephen Censky
SUBJECT: COVID-19 Workforce Guidance on Travel
DATE: March 5, 2020

This memorandum is an update to the guidance dated February 5, 2020 describing USDA travel restrictions in response to COVID-19. Due to the continued spread of COVID-19, the State Department has issued travel [restrictions](#) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has increased the number of [advisories](#) regarding travel. As such, I am updating previous guidance to direct the following:

1. **Official Travel:** Any official USDA travel must be essential, time sensitive work that cannot be handled via distance or remote means and must be cleared by supervisor in advance to 1) countries subject to COVID-19 active Federal restrictions or advisories or 2) to areas during a time period that includes a Federal, state/tribal or local government acknowledged widespread, community outbreak of COVID-19. Avoid placing employees at a significant risk of exposure.
 - a. The latest US travel restrictions at <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel.html> and travel health advisories <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>.
 - b. In light of evolving risks, carefully consider all official travel including to areas not currently subject to restrictions, advisories or widespread community outbreak.
2. **Personal Travel:** Employees should be made aware of the travel restrictions and advisory information and encouraged to re-consider personal travel to countries or areas affected by COVID-19. Employees who return from travel to such areas may be subject to mitigation including self-quarantine.
3. **Travel to Impacted Areas:** Employees should notify their supervisors and take appropriate mitigation steps, including 14-day self-quarantine, if over the last 14 days they have traveled to countries or regions 1) during a time period that includes a Federal, state/tribal or local government acknowledged widespread, community outbreak of COVID-19 or 2) to which the Federal government has issued an active travel restriction or advisory, e.g., reconsider travel, travel not recommended, only essential travel or do not travel.
 - a. These employees should telework if they are telework ready. Employees who are not telework ready should be granted excused absence using Weather & Safety Leave (WebTA Code TC-66).
 - b. At the end of the 14-calendar day period, employees who are not ill are expected to return to their normal work schedule and location.
 - c. If an employee returning from travel subject to this guidance does not follow the 14-day self-quarantine or comes to work showing symptoms,¹ their supervisor should send the employee home until the 14 days has elapsed or employee is fully recovered.

¹ Symptoms include acute respiratory illness with fever. Do not come to work until free of fever (100.4° F [37.8° C] or greater using an oral thermometer), signs of a fever, and any other symptoms for at least 24 hours, *without* the use of fever-reducing or other symptom-altering medicines (e.g. cough suppressants).

4. **Operational Planning:** Agencies should review their Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP) to ensure that telework is fully incorporated and that employees are telework capable/telework ready.
 - a. Employees in telework eligible positions should be prepared to telework if instructed to do so.
 - b. Test the telework readiness IT systems in the event COOP plans are executed. The latest telework guidance is at https://www.ocio.usda.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2012/DR%204080-811-002_Telework%20Program.pdf.

If you have questions about this memorandum, please contact Jessica Fantinato ([Jessica Fantinato@usda.gov](mailto:Jessica.Fantinato@usda.gov)) with the USDA Office of Homeland Security.