



## West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District COVID-19 Safety Policy (Version 10 – Effective May 27, 2021)

### **Intent & Background:**

Governor Brown's "Stay Home, Save Lives" shelter-in-place executive order during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic of 2020 explicitly states: "10. When telework and work-from-home options are not available, businesses and non-profits must designate an employee or officer to establish, implement, and enforce social distancing policies, consistent with guidance from the Oregon Health Authority. Such policies also must address how the business or non-profit will maintain social distancing protocols for business-critical visitors." This policy addresses how the West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District (WMSWCD) will comply with this order and how it will interact with its contractors and partners; it is subject to change as more information is made available. This policy was drafted after reaching out to partnering agencies to assess best practices during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This policy will be evolving in conjunction with current guidelines and practices, and may be rescinded if and when it is no longer necessary. Most recently (May 19, 2021) the Oregon Occupational Safety and Health Administration adopted guidance that incorporated the Oregon Health Authority's relaxed direction on facial mask and social distancing requirements for individuals who are fully vaccinated. The District is NOT changing its policy on mask and physical distancing requirements in response to this new direction as the District does not want to make a distinction in policy based on the vaccination status of individuals.

### **Designated Policy Enforcement Employees:**

The following WMSWCD staff are charged with establishing, implementing, and enforcing social distancing policies, consistent with guidance from the Oregon Health Authority (OHA):

- Jim Cathcart, District Manager, [jim@wmswcd.org](mailto:jim@wmswcd.org)
- Michelle Delepine, Invasive Species Program Coordinator, [michelle@wmswcd.org](mailto:michelle@wmswcd.org)

### **Contractor COVID-19 Worker and Work Site Policy (Contractor Expectations):**

Contractors must provide WMSWCD with a copy of their COVID-19 worker and work site social distancing and related policy and the effective date of the policy. Contractor will notify WMSWCD of updates to the provided policy.

### **Maintaining Social (aka Physical) Distancing (Employee & Contractor Expectations):**

Regardless of an employee's or contractor's COVID-19 vaccination status, all employees, contractors, and landowners are expected to abide by OHA's social distancing guidelines. If these social distancing guidelines are ignored by staff, contractors, or landowners, work will be suspended until safety precautions are met. In alignment with this guidance, when employees leave their homes for work related activities, they must:

- Maintain a minimum 6-foot distance from others
- Wash or sanitize hands after contact with any surface
- Avoid groups and contact with other people indoors
- Stay home if sick. Staff and contractors must stay home and consult with a doctor or a clinic if experiencing any of these symptoms: fever of 100° or higher, cough, sore throat, runny nose, shortness of breath and body aches

WMSWCD staff must communicate with landowners and partners to convey the need to respect social distancing guidelines and share the requirement to wear a facemask when staff and/or contractors are on site.

### **Face Covering Guidance (Employee & Contractor Expectations):**

Regardless of an employee's or contractor's COVID-19 vaccination status, all employees, contractors, and landowners are expected to abide by the statewide mask requirement guidance which can be found in its entirety here <https://sharesystems.dhsoha.state.or.us/DHSForms/Served/Ie2288K.pdf>. Please note that the relaxation of the mask requirement for fully vaccinated individuals in the updated statewide mask guidance is nullified by the fact that the updated statewide guidance still requires vaccinated individuals to wear masks in any setting where the owner or operator continues to require masks, face coverings or face shields such as is the case with WMSWCD.

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This includes the following pertinent guidance:

- Wear a mask or equivalent approved face covering indoors at the office and any other places of business, unless an accommodation or exemption is required by law.
- Masks, face shields or face coverings are not required when eating/drinking or when at or in an outdoor location where the employee, contractor or volunteer is not interacting with the public and six (6) or more feet of distance can be consistently maintained from other people.
- Masks are required to be worn in District vehicles (except when travelling alone) or in any vehicle when in the presence of others that are not part of your household.

Additional guidance on face covering protocols in the field or office can be found in the field and office work added precautions sections below.

**Employee Illness & Health Guidance (Employee & Contractor Expectations):**

All WMSWCD employees and contractors are expected to follow Multnomah County COVID-19 guidance if they are feeling ill (current health guidance from Multnomah County can be accessed here:

<https://sharedsystems.dhsoha.state.or.us/DHSForms/Served/le2320A.pdf>):

- Employees who have a cough/fever illness should stay home until they are free of fever and any other symptoms for at least 72 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medicines or cough suppressants).
- Employees that becomes sick with a fever and cough illness at work must be sent home immediately.
- Employees who are sick with an acute respiratory illness must seek medical attention.

In addition to adhering to OHA's & Multnomah County guidelines, WMSWCD encourages all employees to keep up to date with Center for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) guidelines, including additional guidelines to protect each other, by regularly visiting: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

**If an Employee Tests Positive for COVID-19 (Employee & Contractor Expectations):**

WMSWCD will balance employee privacy rights under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) with public health considerations, including protection of all employees and exposed other parties, including contractors. Employees are strongly encouraged to self-report a positive COVID-19 result, but under current law, employees are not required to disclose test results, whether they have been tested, or a positive COVID-19 diagnosis. However, for public health reasons, anyone with a positive test result should notify those with whom they have come into contact. Once a report is received, the WMSWCD District Manager will relay a message to staff about the positive diagnosis of a fellow staff member without revealing the name of the staff that's reported. This will allow others on staff who may have been exposed to be informed of a positive case and to take appropriate precautions. Note that any positive COVID-19 test in the United States must be reportable by the clinical laboratory or healthcare provider to the applicable state Department of Public Health. The public health department will then generally notify employers that one of their employees tested positive (usually without divulging the name). If WMSWCD gets notified from the public health department or from an employee of a positive COVID-19 test result, we will notify all employees, and contractors and other parties as applicable, that a WMSWCD employee (without specifically naming the individual) tested positive and each person should seek medical care if symptoms develop.

**If a Partner or Contractor Recently in Direct Contact with an Employee and/or Recently On-Site at the WMSWCD Office Tests Positive for COVID-19 (For Contractor & Partner Consideration):**

WMSWCD strongly encourages anyone who has had direct contact with a staff member either in the office and/or in the field who tests positive for COVID-19 to notify WMSWCD District Manager. We ask that those who have tested positive provide a report that explains which staff may have been exposed, when the exposure might have occurred, and if the WMSWCD office was visited, all areas of the building visited with dates and timeframes (without specifically naming the individual that's tested positive). If the WMSWCD District Manager is notified, the District Manager will notify all employees and, if applicable the building manager and other contractors and parties, that a WMSWCD contractor or partner (without specifically naming the individual) tested positive and anyone who in recent contact with a contractor or partner should seek medical care if symptoms develop.

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**District Manager Contact Information (for reporting positive testing for COVID-19):**

- Jim Cathcart, District Manager, [jim@wmswcd.org](mailto:jim@wmswcd.org)

**Additional Office Work Precautions (Employee Expectations):**

Any staff member that must visit the office will notify other staff via Microsoft Teams and the Outlook Equipment Calendar to better ensure that other staff members won't be present, so as to minimize interfacing with each other.

Regardless of an employee's or contractor's COVID-19 vaccination status, employees are **expected to wear a face cover whenever they are at the office and in a common work area outside of their desk or work station**. Staff are to eat and/or drink at their workstation or at alternative areas outside the office to reduce potential contamination of shared spaces and surfaces. Staff are expected to both wear a face cover and wash or disinfect hands (w/ hand sanitizer) prior to handling of any shared equipment/surfaces, including the following:

- Xerox Machine
- Shredder
- Keys
- Postage Machine
- Tools
- Refrigerator
- Toaster
- Water Cooler
- Miscellaneous Shared Office Equipment/Supplies

**Additional Field Work Precautions (Employee Expectations & For Contractor Consideration):**

WMSWCD must first consider the safety of staff and contractors when prioritizing projects requiring field work. If WMSWCD staff feel working conditions are unsafe they are empowered to seek safety effective immediately and seek solutions to remedy any safety issues that arise. If any WMSWCD staff member who would normally conduct field work is unable or unwilling to do so during the pandemic, WMSWCD will make alternative accommodations to provide work that may be conducted remotely.

WMSWCD employees conducting field work are required to minimize their exposure to the public and each other through a number of measures, in addition to adhering to Oregon Health Authority's social distancing policies. WMSWCD staff and its contractors are to consider and plan for logistical constraints related to parking and staging areas to ensure enough space for safe operations. When staff do find a need to visit a public space, such as a gas station or restroom, they are expected to wear a mask and wash or sanitize hands after contact with any surface.

All door knocks on site are suspended, and staff and/or contractors must instead call or email landowners to alert them of site visits. Any necessary paperwork and documents will be sent electronically or by mail whenever possible. If a phone number or email is not available, staff will use alternative methods to notify landowners, such as paper notifications, as a last resort. Staff must arrange with the project lead to ensure that door hangers or other paper notices are available for all field operations as needed.

Contractors are encouraged to establish stable crews when possible, but WMSWCD recognizes that crew stability may be impacted by school closures, illness, and quarantine. If crew co-workers live in shared housing, WMSWCD strongly encourages them to work together on established and stable crews. WMSWCD will not be requiring limits to the number of people on a crew, but will ask that crews be scaled in size such that they can safely observe social distancing guidelines and complete the work outlined in the work order. WMSWCD will rely upon its contractors to make appropriate decisions about the size and structure of their work force, work force use of public spaces and the COVID-19 travel safety rules they should follow when reporting for work or job site.

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**Field Work Sanitation and Equipment Cleaning (Contractor COVID-19 Mobilization Fee and Reimbursable Labor):**

WMSWCD strongly prefers that staff and contractors be adequately supplied with equipment to allow each worker to have sole use of any given equipment throughout a work day. This will help prevent exposure from one employee to another. If equipment must be shared between employees it must be sanitized between uses. Sharing of equipment should be limited to the extent feasible.

Contractors may elect to seek out a flat rate sanitation fee of \$25 per day per crew to cover supplies and COVID-19 personal protective equipment such as masks plus an additional labor charge for time spent performing additional sanitation and cleaning of equipment. This additional time is billable under the manual labor provision, but only when carried out in excess of standard operations. Contractors must communicate any anticipated labor costs associated with COVID-19 related equipment cleaning to the WMSWCD project lead prior to initiating work. This will ensure that project leads have the funds to cover these expenses. Reimbursement should not be assumed if the WMSWCD project lead doesn't approve these anticipated costs prior to initiating work.

**Travel and Mileage (COVID-19 Reimbursable Mileage Fee for Contractors):**

To reduce exposure between staff and contracted crews/employees, and to follow social distancing guidelines, contractors and staff are encouraged to avoid carpooling in fully occupied vehicles. This will help to prevent exposure between co-workers, and may require travel in more than one vehicle. This policy empowers staff to make decisions on carpooling based on putting their own safety first and foremost and as such mileage expenses for staff choosing not to carpool are reimbursable at the full mileage rate of \$0.56 per mile even though alternative transportation may have been available. As indicated above, should an employee choose to carpool with others, masks are required to be worn by all occupants.

As of March 27th, 2020, WMSWCD authorizes contractors to seek reimbursement for COVID-19-incurred costs associated with using additional vehicles. Mileage will be reimbursed at the current federal mileage rate of \$0.56 per mile. This rate will be updated with any revisions to federal mileage rates.

Contractor mileage can only be claimed on additional vehicles and miles driven outside of normal operations. Mileage cannot be claimed for vehicles that would have been on site prior to the current social distancing guidelines. For additional vehicles, mileage calculations must start at the location of standard operation. For example, if contractor employees normally meet at an office or agreed upon location and then carpool to a site, mileage calculations must start at this office or meeting location. However, if the contractor's COVID-19 policy requires contractor employees to either start from or end at their residence, then the mileage calculations can start or end at their place of residence.

These travel reimbursements are intended to offset additional costs to WMSWCD staff and contractor employees. To qualify for additional mileage reimbursement, contractors must communicate any anticipated mileage reimbursement costs to the WMSWCD project lead issuing the work order prior to initiating work. This will ensure that project leads have the funds to cover these expenses. Reimbursement shouldn't be assumed if the project lead doesn't approve these anticipated costs prior to initiating work. If electing to request the Mobilization Fee Flat Rate Option (below), contractors are not eligible for reimbursement of any additional costs related to COVID-19 travel and mileage.

**COVID-19 Mobilization Fee Flat Rate Option for Contractors:**

Contractors may elect to seek out a flat rate mobilization fee of \$100 per day per crew for additional mileage expenses, in lieu of seeking COVID-19 mileage reimbursement rates incurred for the same (as explained in the Reimbursable COVID-19 Mobilization Fee section). Please prorate the mobilization fee for partial crews working a full day or full crews working partial days or some combination (e.g. \$50 for a half a crew working a full day or a full crew working a half a day; \$67 for 2/3 of a crew working a full day or a full crew working 2/3 of a day or \$25 for half a crew working half a day). Mileage mobilization fees can only be claimed when additional vehicles and miles are driven outside of normal operations. Mileage cannot be claimed for vehicles that normally would have been on site prior to the current social distancing guidelines. Contractors must also communicate any anticipated mobilization fee costs to the WMSWCD project lead prior to initiating work to be eligible for reimbursement. This will ensure that project leads have the funds to cover these expenses. If the WMSWCD project lead doesn't approve these anticipated costs prior to initiating work.

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**Staff Duty Stations, Use of District Vehicles and Personal Vehicle Mileage Reimbursement (Employee Expectations)**

Due to the WMSWCD office being officially closed for the foreseeable future, employee duty stations for reporting to work will be their residence. Effective October 1, 2020 – in recognition that the office’s closure will continue beyond what was initially anticipated as more temporary -- work related mileage for personal vehicle use can be claimed with your residence as the point of origin or ending point including mileage you incur coming to and from the office. Mileage will be reimbursed at the full rate (currently, \$0.56 per mile). Commuting mileage (the distance between your residence and the office) does not have to be deducted for any trips originating from or ending at your residence including trips made to and from the office. Similarly, travel time to and from your residence home office to places of work including the WMSWCD office is considered work time.

Staff may use their District credit card, or alternatively submit for expense reimbursement, the cost of materials, supplies and any ergonomic furniture or features needed to work officially from home. Staff must get prior approval from their supervisor for work at residence related costs exceeding \$50. Any items purchased are property of the District and must be returned to the District when no longer needed at an employee’s residence. In addition, staff can claim \$50 per six month period to cover extra costs that have been incurred related to working from home, which includes extra wear and tear on your home-based personal equipment, extra utility costs, and other miscellaneous costs.

WMSWCD staff may access/use District vehicles, however the following protocols are expected whenever using a vehicle to minimize exposure to other staff:

- Reserve the vehicle on WMSWCD’s Outlook vehicle calendar whenever planning on using it and aim to reserve a vehicle that’s not been used by staff recently whenever feasible.
- For all shared vehicles in circulation, wear a face covering/mask while in the vehicle and disinfect vehicle surfaces that you may come in contact with (i.e. steering wheel, shifter, etc.) before and after vehicle use.

The following staff mileage reimbursement provisions are being piloted on a temporary basis through December 31, 2020 upon which time they will be evaluated with respect to their impact on the District’s adopted budget:

- WMSWCD staff may seek mileage reimbursement for use of their personal vehicles for work-related trips originating from or returning to their place of residence including trips to and from the District office.
- Mileage will be reimbursed at the current federal mileage rate of \$0.575 per mile. Staff are encouraged to use the alternative federal mileage rate of \$0.20 per mile for reimbursement of trips to the office if the reason for coming to the office is to work there as an alternative to working from their residence. These rates will be updated with any revisions to federal mileage rates.

**Invoicing and Operations (for Field Contractors):**

WMSWCD is continuing to operate with minimal disruption to normal administrative procedures. WMSWCD employees are currently working remotely, and all administrative processes are continuing to operate in accordance with standard WMSWCD practices, with additional electronic payment processing options now available. Emailing electronic invoices is strongly preferred to mailing paper copies to reduce handling exposure and speed up processing time. For the invoice items related to mileage, sanitation or the mobilization fee, please denote this as a line item on your invoice as “Reimbursable COVID-19 Mobilization Fee” if seeking mileage and sanitation labor reimbursement with the required documentation attached. If you are opting for the flat rate option please include “COVID-19 Mobilization Fee: Flat Rate”. *To inquire and learn more about payment and invoicing options please contact Randi Razalenti at [randi@wmswcd.org](mailto:randi@wmswcd.org).*

**How Contractors Can Help During the Coronavirus Pandemic:**

Field workers use a lot of the same personal protective equipment used by medical professionals. Due to the pandemic, these resources are in short supply. If contractors have a surplus of gloves or other sought-after personal protective equipment, WMSWCD asks that they check with the state of Oregon, at the link below, to see if these meet medical required standards. If so, please consider donating extra supplies to the state’s cache for COVID-19 preparedness to help meet the demand of medical professionals on the front line. <https://www.myoregon.gov/2020/03/19/medical-professionals-asked-to-donate-surplus-ppe/>.