

Vermont Agency of Natural Resources

Guidance for Safe Field Work and Site Inspections

March 20, 2020

Overall Guidance to Slow the Spread of COVID-19:

- **Avoid close contact.** Please observe social distancing, meaning maintaining at least six feet of physical separation from others. Avoid contact with people who appear to be sick.
- **Stay home when you are sick.** Regardless of whether your plans for the day involve office work or field work - if you are sick, stay home to prevent spreading your illness to others.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.** Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.
- **Cover your mouth and nose.** Cover your mouth and nose with your elbow when coughing or sneezing to prevent the spread of germs.
- **Clean your hands.** Wash your hands frequently and for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% Ethyl Alcohol.
- **Practice other good health habits.** Use household cleaning spray or wipes to clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

Social Distancing Best Practices for Field Work:

Below are some guidelines for engaging in field activities with other ANR or State of Vermont staff; exercise individual judgment if you feel it is necessary or prudent to follow stricter guidelines.

Field work with ANR staff – Keep to small groups – two to three people – and keep your social distance, meaning 6 feet apart from others. Remember, if you are sick or have been in contact with someone who may have COVID-19 or someone who has recently returned from travel from high risk areas, you should remain at home until the risk is over.

- It is recommended that staff drive separately. If it is not feasible to drive separately, reschedule or reconfigure the meeting in order to allow staff to drive separately, driving a personal vehicle is acceptable. If driving a personal vehicle, place your business card in a visible dashboard location while in the field. During the State of Emergency, employees utilizing a personal vehicle will be reimbursed at the full (\$.575/per mile) reimbursement rate.
 - In instances where critical work requires more than one person per vehicle, avoid direct contact with your colleagues, wash hands/use hand sanitizer, and utilize disinfecting wipes in the vehicle when work is complete.
- Maintain hand sanitizers and disinfecting wipes in vehicles and use often, especially when soap and water are not available/practical. Wipe down shared vehicle surfaces with disinfectant before and after use.
- Maintain personal control over equipment and do not share equipment to the extent possible (such as sampling tools, radios, etc.).
- When you return to the office, be sure to wash your hands thoroughly and then wipe equipment down with disinfecting wipes prior to returning it to where it is stored. Limit the number of staff, preferably to one at a time, returning equipment to storage areas.

Fields Visit with Landowners or Partners

Before going on an in-person field visit with landowners or partners, review the following questions to provide mutual assurances that the meeting is not a risk. If there is a “yes” answer to any of the questions, you should reschedule or approach the meeting differently.

- Would prefer we cancel or postpone the meeting?
- Have you or anybody you have close contact with has been diagnosed with COVID-19 or had any contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19?
- Have you or anyone you have had close contact with has returned from travel out of the country?
- Have you had within the last 24 hours, any cold or flu symptoms, a fever, shortness of breath, body aches, or coughing?

If the meeting is necessary and landowners or partners are essential, follow the guidelines below to mitigate the risk.

- Do not let others ride in your vehicle.
- Maintain hand sanitizers and disinfecting wipes in vehicles and use often, especially when soap and water are not available/practical. Wipe down shared vehicle surfaces with disinfectant before and after use.
- Maintain personal control over equipment and do not share equipment to the extent possible (such as firearms, radios, etc).

Staying Safe in the Field

Since staff should not be congregating back at the office at the end of the day, we want to make sure to make sure everyone returns safely from the field. The following protocol is recommended, if you are working alone:

- **Inform your supervisor:** If you are working in the field, let your supervisor know where you will be and when you expect to return, preferably also updating your Outlook Calendar with travel time and time you expect to be on the visit.
- **Notify your supervisor:** When you return, notify your supervisor that you are back safe.
- **Supervisor check in:** If someone in the field did not check in, reach out to them.

You and your supervisor should confirm your plan and make good use of the tools available to you. Use your Outlook calendars to indicate where you will be and text when you get back. Also, if you are out in the field alone, make sure you have the necessary PPE and communication tools (e.g., locator device, portable cell phone charger).

Educational Workshops and Seminars

In addition to field visits, many of you are asked to participate in educational workshops and presentations. As a reminder, public gatherings are strongly discouraged between now and April 6, and gatherings of more than 50 people are prohibited. Further, State employees are currently prohibited from traveling out of state for official business. Limits on public gathering and out of state travel could be

extended. If you are presenting at a non-ANR event during this time, let them know the State of Vermont guidelines and that you are not able to present. Instead consider the use of technology to engage.