

MassDEP

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| Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection  Bureau of Water Resources  Watershed Planning Program |

**Safety Guidance for WPP Field & Laboratory Operations**

**During the COVID-19 Pandemic (2022)**

CN 535.3

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| **Prepared by:** |  | **Date:** |  |
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|  | *Richard Carey, Acting WPP Program Director* |  |

**List of Revisions**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Revision Date** | **Revision Description** | **Rev.#** |
| 8/10/20 | Original SOP (CN 535.0) | 1.3 |
| 3/1/21 | Draft SOP for 2021 (CN 535.2) | 1.0 |
| 6/8/21 | Changes based on Governor’s order #69 (issued May 28, 2021) lifting remaining COVID-19 restrictions and rescinding most COVID-19 Orders. | 1.1 |
| 8/2/21 | Changes based on MADPH July 30, 2021 advisory, recommending mask wearing indoors | 1.2 |
| 3/29/22 | Changes based on the 2/28/22 expiration of EEA’s Mask Mandate | 1.3 |
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# Executive Summary

On February 28, 2022 EEA’s mask mandate expired and was not renewed or extended. This meant that moving forward, staff were not required to wear masks and practice social distancing when working at the CERO office in Worcester. This document has been revised to be consistent with EEA’s Covid-19 safety guidance. In summary, staff are not required to wear masks while at the office, driving state vehicles or doing field work. Staff are expected to adhere to the policies of any external entities that they may visit or interact with, particularly if these policies are more stringent than those of EEA. While masks are not required, staff are free to wear their masks if that is their preference. Staff are also encouraged to wear masks in close contact situations, especially when interacting with the public.

It is important to note that the COVID-19 pandemic is still ongoing, so it is possible that more stringent safety protocols may need to be re-imposed as needed. This fluid situation created by the pandemic calls for all staff to remain vigilant and employ the best safety practices at all times.

# Objective

This guidance is intended to protect against the spread of the COVID-19 virus during environmental monitoring activities conducted by the Watershed Planning Program (WPP). **All WPP staff (including seasonal workers) are required to follow these procedures until further guidance is provided and approved by MassDEP. All procedures herein are consistent with current MA EEA COVID-19 safety protocols.** As MA official guidance and requirements related to COVID-19 change, this SOP will be revised and re-approved as appropriate, and staff will be notified immediately. Because the guidance cannot cover every specific situation encountered, staff are expected to apply these procedures using sound judgement and with “**safety first**” in mind. Any modifications or deviations from these guidelines needed and requested by individual staff persons shall be pre-approved prior to implementation. Please see your immediate supervisor if you have any questions regarding the interpretation of the guidelines and for any specific situations not covered herein.

# General Precautions for COVID-19

WPP Staff shall adhere to the following safety precautions, regardless of testing or vaccination status:

* **STAFF SHALL NOT ENGAGE IN ANY FIELD, LAB, OR OFFICE ACTIVITIES IF THEY HAVE A FEVER OR OTHER SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19, HAVE BEEN IN RECENT CONTACT WITH SOMEONE THAT EXHIBITED SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19 OR TESTED POSITIVE FOR COVID 19, HAVE TESTED POSITIVE FOR COVID-19, ARE IN VOLUNTARY QUARANTINE, HAVE A MEDICAL CONDITION WHICH PREVENTS WEARING A FACE MASK, OR ARE UNCOMFORTABLE PERFORMING THE ACTIVITY DUE TO HEALTH CONCERNS.**
* **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 any potential illness to others.
* **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.** Germs are often spread when a person touches a contaminated surface and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.
* **Cover your mouth and nose.** Cover your mouth and nose with your elbow or tissues (and discard properly) 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.
* **When available, always carry alcohol-based (≥ 60% alcohol) hand sanitizer** with you for use as needed.
* **Practice other good health habits.**Use household cleaning spray or wipes to clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

# Central Regional Office (CERO) Building Access & Use (as of 03/29/22)

* Access to the CERO building (8 New Bond Street, Worcester) by WPP staff shall adhere strictly to all current CERO building access requirements AND the **Building Access SOP for WPP Field and Laboratory Operations during the COVID-19 Pandemic (CN 535.1**; incorporated herein as Appendix C).
* **Building access must be scheduled and approved in advance using the Massachusetts Workplace Reservation System.**
* **All staff must enter/exit the building via the main entrance.**
* **BUILDING ENTRY & SIGN-IN**: When entering the building at the main entrance, the alarm will deactivate with a valid card swipe so there is no need to turn OFF the alarm. Once inside the building, there is a sign-in/out sheet in the main lobby for staff to use. ALL STAFF MUST SIGN-IN.
* **BUILDING EGRESS & SIGN-OUT:** When work for the day is completed, exit the building at the main entrance to sign out. ALL STAFF MUST SIGN-OUT.
* **ALARM ACTIVATION**: If you know you are the last person to leave the building, you must reset the alarm by pressing #2 (pound sign, then 2) on the keypad that is located directly next to the main entrance.
* **If the alarm is accidently triggered,** turn off the ringing alarm by pressing “06271”, then call Andrea Briggs directly on her cell (978-430-1550) to inform her of the incident.
* If anything goes wrong with the building entry or exit, call your immediate supervisor and Andrea Briggs (978-430-1550).
* In general, if you feel any anxiety or discomfort while inside the building at any time, you can leave immediately following the egress protocol.
* If desired, conduct disinfection cleaning of all the surfaces that you feel could be contaminated and that you are likely to touch during work (e.g., vehicle interiors, computer mouse, keyboards, equipment, etc.).

# Vehicle Use

* **The use of state vehicles with more than one person per vehicle is allowed for field work.** Use of personal vehicles for field work is allowed when state vehicles are not available. If a personal vehicle is allowed for WPP field work, more than one staff member are allowed to occupy that vehicle during that time.
* **Mask use while not required, is encouraged if two or more persons are occupying the same vehicle.**
* All vehicles must be signed out at least one week in advance. Individual vehicles are NOT assigned to individual staff.
* **Vehicle Disinfection**. Clean and disinfect vehicle **after** field day/trip. Keep vehicle doors open while disinfecting. Disposable gloves should be worn during the disinfecting process. Wipe down all the vehicle’s contact surfaces with an approved disinfecting product. Avoid using bleach, hydrogen peroxide or ammonia-based cleaning products because of their potential to damage car interiors.
* Follow manufacturer’s directions for using cleaning/disinfecting products provided (e.g., leave Lysol products on surface for 2 minutes before rubbing dry)
* DO NOT USE BLEACH SOLUTION ON VEHICLE INTERIOR

# Field Work-Related Procedures

The following are general guidance procedures to be followed by field and support staff. Since each field survey has specific activities and associated risks, crew leads are responsible to plan and communicate effectively to complete surveys successfully, implement “safety first” principles and minimize risks related to COVID-19.

Pre-Survey Preparation

* **Field crews shall consist of a minimum of two individuals (standard WPP safety practice), and there is no upper limit to the # of staff per crew.**
* **Changes to crew staffing may occur as needed. These changes may be to ensure that seasonal staff are fully trained on all aspects on WPP field work. Availability of staff and need for additional members on a crew may also result in changes to field crews.**
* Clean and disinfect all equipment following use, as feasible (see PPE details below).
* **Communicate with labs before deliveries to ascertain any lab-specific protocols that they require.**

PPE and COVID-19-related Equipment: See also Appendix 1

* **Primary (1) and spare (1) face masks**. The wearing of a face mask or multi-layer cloth face covering is required during field work and for related activities for unvaccinated and not fully vaccinated staff. Disposable masks should be replaced daily. Even while wearing a face mask or cloth face covering, social distancing measures should still be followed (≥6ft) as much as possible. Wearing two masks, subject to personal preference and comfort, may offer additional protection. Cloth face coverings should be secured with ties or ear loops, fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face, include multiple layers of fabric, allow for breathing without restriction, and be able to be laundered and machine dried without damage or change to shape. If respiratory issues (e.g., from heat exhaustion, over-exertion) arise when wearing a face mask or cloth face covering, you should remove it, maintain social distancing, rest until recovered and return to using the face mask (and seek immediate medical attention if needed). When removed temporarily during work, face masks need to remain in a position that allows it to be easily and quickly pulled back up in place properly and securely over the nose and mouth as needed.
* **Spray disinfectant.** Use [EPA-registered household disinfectant](https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2)s, dilute household bleach solution (1/3 cup per gallon water; leave on the surface for at least 1 minute; bleach solutions will be effective for disinfection up to 24 hours) and/or alcohol solutions with at least 60% alcohol. Multiple sprayers in appropriate locations as needed (e.g., loading dock, labs, vehicles, etc.) <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>
* **Hand sanitizer (**alcohol-based with at least 60% Ethyl Alcohol). Maximize contact time to ensure effectiveness.
* **Waste bag(s)**
* **Paper towel roll(s).**
* **Safety glasses.** Recommended for providing protection when handling sample preservatives, using disinfecting products, etc.
* **Insect repellent.** As always, protect against insect bites (generally not considered a vector for COVID-19 spread)

Public Interaction during field activity:

* **Staff are encouraged to maintain social distancing and wear a face mask/PPE when appropriate in public spaces.** Field work often requires visitation of public areas and businesses. These high use areas can be contact points for transmission of COVID-19. When visiting highway rest areas, gas stations, shipping centers such as USPS, UPS, or FedEx, convenience stores, restaurants, etc. park away from other vehicles.
* **Staff are encouraged to wear masks during close outside interactions with the public and maintain social distancing when possible.**

On-site survey activity:

* As always, use common sense, good judgement, and do not rush field activities.
* For tasks where close or shared placement of hands is unavoidable, gloves are recommended where possible.
* If Nitrile gloves are used for long periods of time, you should wash or sanitize gloved hands frequently to reduce the possibility of transferring surface droplets on the gloves to other surfaces.
* **Use of gloves for ambient sampling immediately downstream of known wastewater point discharges is required**. At all other times, the use of appropriate gloves for sampling is recommended. **Avoid sampling any undiluted wastewater effluents.**
* Keep personal gear in backpacks. Avoid sharing garments, hats, sunglasses, sunscreen, bug spray, etc.
* Avoid sharing phones or other personal use items.
* In between sampling locations during the survey, take any appropriate safety measures required based on this guidance to maintain cleanliness.
* Clean hands immediately following activities involving contact with potentially contaminated surfaces.

Post-Survey Activities:

* When you return to the office following field work, be sure to wash your hands thoroughly and then clean equipment with soap and water and/or disinfecting solution prior to returning it to where it is stored (DO NOT USE ALCOHOL OR AMMONIA-BASED CLEANERS ON SENSITIVE INSTRUMENTATION).
* The crew lead must confirm that everyone returns safely from the field and report in. Make sure you have the necessary communication tools (e.g., locator device, portable cell phone charger). If you are working in the field, let your supervisor know where you will be and when you expect to return. **For crew leads, when you return, notify your supervisor that you and your partner(s) are back safe and have exited the building safely.** If field staff 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.
* Follow building egress protocols when leaving for the day (see above).

# Boat Use

* Discuss with your crew partner, prior to departure, how the work will be specifically performed in order to perform work efficiently.
* Disinfecting of all hard, non-porous surfaces and equipment will be performed at the end of the day utilizing disposable paper towels and disinfecting spray, such as Lysol or soapy water (depending on the item). Never spray liquids directly onto electronics. Gloves and facemasks should be worn while disinfecting surfaces.
* Garbage generated onboard will be placed in the dumpster at the end of each day.

# Waste Disposal

* Used PPE and other waste generated during field work should be collected throughout the day in a garbage bag that has been placed inside a waste receptacle container at the start of field work each day. At the end of the day, the garbage bag should be securely closed and disposed in an outdoor trash receptacle at the lab/office. The waste receptacle container should then be washed or disinfected.

# Sample Delivery to WES/Contract Labs

* Follow all lab-specific requirements for sample deliveries during COVID-19 mitigation period. If/when lab requirements or practices related to COVID-19 conflict with this guidance, use good judgement and follow this guidance as a default.

# Overnight Lodging (reserved)

* If possible, avoid overnight stays for the purposes of fieldwork.

# WPP Laboratory Work

* **Where feasible, stagger scheduled work times** in required lab areas to minimize the number of staff in the same area at the same time.
* Upon first re-entry into the lab area(s), the Field & Lab Operations Coordinator (**OC; Mr. Shervon DeLeon**) will conduct a general disinfection cleaning of all the surfaces that may be touched during work to the maximum extent practicable.
* The OC shall provide calibrated probes for field use the day before they are needed. These will be kept in the Instrumentation Lab for pickup (as usual). Maintain safe spacing when picking probes up and delivering them back to the lab for post-checks.
* Wash your hands with soap and hot water upon entering and leaving.
* Daily, the OC will coordinate with field and lab staff to ensure that protocols are being followed and that laboratory work surfaces are being cleaned.
* **Lab instrument operation:** Lab instruments refer to benchtop meters, filtration devices, spectrophotometer, turbidimeter, etc. Prior to operation, the assigned staff shall sanitize the meter and surrounding area with an alcohol-based sanitizer (60% or higher). This includes instrument touch points, lab bench area, etc. When you are done operating an instrument, take care to sanitize all common touch points and lab bench area.
* **Microscope use: Before and after use,** commonly touched surfaces in the work area and on the instruments shall be cleaned using an alcohol-based sanitizer. Avoid contact with optical parts to avoid damage to the scopes.

# COVID-19 Related References

**MA Guidance:**

https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-state-of-emergency

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-updates-and-information>

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-guidance-and-directives>

CDC:

**https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/guidance.html**

**Occupational Health and Safety Administration**: [Coronavirus Disease 2019 web page](https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/)

**CDC face coverings:**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>

**Gloves:**  [donning and doffing techniques](https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/npptl/pdfs/PPE-Sequence-508.pdf)

**CDC guidance regarding hand washing and hand sanitizer:**

<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html>

**CDC videos for demonstrations on proper hand washing technique:**

<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/videos.html>

**CDC guidance for cleaning and disinfecting procedures:**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>

**How to properly put on and remove PPE:**

<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/npptl/pdfs/PPE-Sequence-508.pdf>

**Guidance on vehicle disinfection:**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/disinfecting-transport-vehicles.html>

[GSA Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Vehicles](https://doimspp.sharepoint.com/sites/GS-NEWENG-Safety/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2Fsites%2FGS%2DNEWENG%2DSafety%2FShared%20Documents%2FGeneral%2FHome%2FGSA%20Vehicle%20Cleaning%20%20Disinfecting%20Guidance%20for%20COVID%2D19%2Epdf&parent=%2Fsites%2FGS%2DNEWENG%2DSafety%2FShared%20Documents%2FGeneral%2FHome)

**Public spaces:** Follow [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html) and [DOI/USGS](https://doimspp.sharepoint.com/sites/doicov) recommended guidelines when in public spaces

# **APPENDIX 1: COVID-19-related PPE and Cleaning Supplies** \*

* **Primary (1) and spare (minimum 1) face masks (**reusable multi-layer cloth (personal) and/or disposable). Cloth face coverings or disposable face masks should be secured with ties or ear loops, fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face, include multiple layers of fabric, and allow for breathing without restriction. Wearing two masks, subject to personal preference and comfort, may offer additional protection. Cloth masks must be able to be laundered and machine dried without damage or change to shape. Always carry at least one spare mask in case the primary is compromised, lost or damaged.
* **Concentrated soap dispenser(s) and tap water carboy(s).**
* **Spray disinfectant(s).** Use [EPA-registered household disinfectant](https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2)s, dilute household bleach solution (1/3 cup per gallon water; leave on the surface for at least 1 minute; bleach solutions will be effective for disinfection up to 24 hours) and/or alcohol solutions with at least 60% alcohol. <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>
* **Hand sanitizer(s).** Both large volume (general use) and small bottle for carrying are recommended; alcohol-based with at least 60% Ethyl Alcohol.

*\* These items are required inventory in addition to existing PPE requirements for “normal” field and lab activities and are required to be “on-hand” for use in the field and laboratory as appropriate and consistent with this guidance.*

# **APPENDIX 2: Intent to Implement Safe Field and Laboratory Practices (2022)**

I, the undersigned, have read the ‘Safety Guidance for WPP Field & Laboratory Operations During the COVID-19 Pandemic’ and related guidance provided by MassDEP. I have received the training to fully understand the policies and procedures for field and laboratory work during the COVID-19 response and will implement them to the best of my abilities.

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Name

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signature

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date (mm/dd/yyyy)

# **APPENDIX 3: Building Access SOP for WPP Field & Laboratory Operations During the COVID-19 Pandemic (CN 535.3)**

**List of Revisions**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Revision Date** | **Revision Description** | **Rev.#** |
| 6/18/20 | Original draft/final | 1.0 |
| 3/29/22 | Changes based on the 2/28/22 expiration of EEA’s Mask Mandate | 1.1 |
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# Objective

This guidance was developed to protect against the spread of the COVID-19 virus, specifically when WPP staff enter, use and exit the MassDEP Central Regional Office (CERO) office/lab facility (Worcester, MA). Building access and use is needed to prepare for and conduct surface water monitoring surveys to collect chemical and biological water quality data throughout the Commonwealth. The guidance contains a standard set of procedures to be followed by WPP staff when they enter the building, work in and around the building, and exit the building.

**All WPP staff (including seasonal workers) are required to follow these procedures until further guidance is provided and approved by DEP.** As building access requirements related to COVID-19 evolve, this SOP will be revised and re-approved as appropriate, and staff will be notified immediately. Because the guidance cannot cover every specific situation encountered, staff are expected to apply these procedures using sound judgement, with “**safety first**” in mind, and consistent with COVID-19 safety guidance for WPP field & lab operations (see: Safety Guidance for WPP Field & Laboratory Operations During the COVID-19 Pandemic (2022) (CN 535.3)).

# CERO Building Ingress

* **Building access must be scheduled and approved in advance.** Staff are required to use the Massachusetts Workplace Reservation System to schedule their visits to and access the building.
* **All staff must enter/exit the building via the main entrance.**
* **BUILDING ENTRY & SIGN-IN**: When entering the building at the main entrance, the alarm will deactivate with a valid card swipe so there is no need to turn OFF the alarm. Once inside the building, there is a sign-in/out sheet in the main lobby for staff to use (). ALL STAFF MUST SIGN-IN/OUT. For field teams, this will occur twice per day (sign in/out at the start of the day prior to leaving for the field day; and sign in/out at the end of the day upon return from the field). When returning from the field, each person must stop at the front of the building to sign in, and then proceed to drive to the back of the building for unloading.
* If anything goes wrong with the building entry, call your immediate supervisor and Andrea Briggs (978-430-1550).

# Working inside the CERO Building

* Staff are not required to wear face masks inside the CERO building.
* Conduct disinfection cleaning of all the surfaces that you feel could be contaminated and that you are likely to touch during work.
* On a daily basis, the WPP Operations Coordinator will coordinate with field and lab staff to ensure that protocols are being followed.

# CERO Building Egress

* **BUILDING EGRESS & SIGN-OUT:** When work for the day is completed, exit the building at the main entrance to sign out. ALL STAFF MUST SIGN-OUT. For field teams, this will occur twice per day (sign in/out at the start of the day prior to leaving for the field day; and sign in/out at the end of the day upon return from the field). When returning from the field, each person must stop at the front of the building to sign in, and then proceed to drive to the back of the building for unloading.
* **ALARM ACTIVATION**: If you know you are the last person to leave the building, you must reset the alarm by pressing **“#2**” (pound sign, then 2) on the keypad that is located directly next to the main entrance, and then leave right away (within 10 seconds).
* **If the alarm is accidently triggered,** call Andrea Briggs directly on her cell (978-430-1550), and follow the directions that Andrea or MaryJude give, but they likely will instruct you to disarm the alarm by hitting “**06271**”. Notify the WPP Director and your Section Chief after the fact once all is resolved.
* **REPORTING:** For WPP monitoring teams, contact Art Johnson (cell: 508-934-6465) to report building departure at the end of the day.
* If anything goes wrong with the building exit, call your immediate supervisor and Andrea Briggs (978-430-1550).