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# DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY HEADQUARTERS

## COVID-19 RETURN TO THE FEDERAL WORKPLACE PLAN

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May 18, 2020

**DOE HQ Return to the Federal Workplace Plan**  
**5/18/2020**

**Headquarters Return to the Workplace Plan**

DOE Headquarters (HQ) will use a disciplined, phased approach for re-occupancy of the Forrestal, Germantown and leased facilities in the National Capital Region (NCR) in order to meet the goal of safely returning Federal employees and support service contractors to the workplace in accordance with the *Opening Up America Again*, OMB memo M-20-23, *Aligning Federal Agency Operations with the National Guidelines for Opening Up America Again*, or superseding guidelines. Decisions regarding these facilities will be made by the Secretary of Energy.

The suggested gating criteria in these guidelines will inform the Secretary regarding the phased return-to-workplace process. DOE HQ will monitor applicable state and local orders, and will consider the spirit and intent of those orders to the maximum extent possible while implementing its plan. The Secretary will make any decisions on any changes to the phased approach.

Federal employees and support service contractors returning to the workplace will be based on the nature of their work. As currently planned, in Phase 1, mission-critical personnel whose work is best performed onsite would return to the workplace, including those who are needed to support limited facility operations. In Phase 2, any additional personnel whose jobs are best performed onsite would return and can include senior leadership, staff supporting Primary Mission Essential Functions (PMEFs) and Mission Essential Functions (MEFs), and other senior-level program staff. In Phase 3, all others will return onsite and resume their pre-COVID-19 schedules and telework agreements. In Phases 1 and 2, self-identified vulnerable individuals will remain on full-time telework or weather and safety leave (WSL), as appropriate. In addition, self-identified personnel who live with or provide care for individuals in the vulnerable population will not be required to return to the workplace until Phase 3.

**PHASE DESCRIPTIONS**

DOE HQ will continue to assess any community changes to inform continued risk-based decision-making regarding progressing or regressing through the phases.

**Phase 0 (Pre-planning)**

DOE HQ is currently in Phase 0. During this phase, DOE will continue to plan and prepare the HQ workplace to mitigate risk. Completion of most pre-planning actions will take an estimated two to three weeks.

- **Plan for Phased Return.** Heads of Departmental Elements will recommend the number of employees and support service contractors that should return to HQ facilities in each phase. The Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer (HC) will issue an initial data call requesting each organization's recommendations for Phase 1. As part of the data call, HC will provide guidance on the Framework and HQ Plan to assist senior leaders in developing their recommendations. Departmental Elements will notify employees who will return in Phase 1 when asked to by HC.
- **Guidance for Managers and Returning Employees.** Standard guidance will be developed to facilitate consistent messaging to employees who are returning to the workplace. Messages will include, for example, instructions that personnel stay home if they have flu-like symptoms, expectations for social distancing, and any new entry procedures. Employees identified to return to the workplace will also be provided with instructions on how to self-identify as being vulnerable (as defined in Appendix D of the DOE Framework) so they may be permitted to continue to telework or use WSL, as appropriate. Managers will also receive webinar training to explain the DOE Framework and HQ plan, discuss expectations for safely returning personnel to the workplace, and answer

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questions. This training will be provided prior to Phase 1 and Phase 2 starting so that it can be targeted to those supervisors and employees who will return to the building.

- **Monitor local case trajectory and conditions.** DOE HQ will continuously monitor the local conditions to help determine when to initiate Phase 1 and subsequent phases.
- **Communications.** DOE HQ will maintain transparent communication with the workforce and key external stakeholders as it plans and initiates remobilization activities. DOE HQ will continue to use a variety of communication methods to help connect the workforce to information about the return-to-workplace process. HC will meet with local union chapters to share plans for reopening the HQ buildings.
- **Sanitize and secure all office facilities and leased space.** All DOE HQ and leased office facilities will be sanitized using EPA-approved products. Once cleaned, each suite or work area, including locked and secured areas, will be closed and have signage posted stating that the sanitization took place. This cleaning began on May 4, 2020.
- **Establish enhanced entrance screening criteria and protocols.** As currently planned, DOE HQ will use CDC-informed enhanced entrance screening criteria to determine whether an individual (e.g., Federal employee, onsite support service contractor, or visitor) may enter a facility. Returning personnel will receive communications advising that they may not enter the workplace if they have flu-like symptoms, including a temperature over 100.4 degrees. Notices to this effect will be posted outside all HQ building entrances asking, for example:
  1. Today or within the last 10 days, have you had a fever, an unusual cough, shortness of breath, and/or difficulty breathing?
  2. Within the last 14 days, have you had close contact with someone who has been sick with COVID-19?
  3. Within the last 14 days, were you told to self-quarantine?Individuals answering “yes” to any of these questions will not be permitted to enter the facility. DOE federal employees will be returned to telework or placed on sick leave or WSL, as appropriate, until they are able to answer the questions satisfactorily. Support service contractor employees will report back to their employer who will coordinate with the contracting officer.
- **Implement social distancing protocols.** Social distancing protocols will be implemented for Phase 1 and will be revisited prior to initiating subsequent phases. For HQ, this includes:
  - **Face Coverings.** Personnel are encouraged, but not required, to wear face coverings while in HQ facilities, especially high traffic areas where social distancing cannot be achieved (e.g., busy hallways, lobby, and elevators). Personnel who wish to use a face covering should bring one to the facility. Depending on availability and demand, face coverings will be provided at facility entrances for those who want one.
  - **Common Areas.** Areas such as cafeterias and gyms where employees are likely to congregate will continue to be closed until Phase 3.
  - **Meetings and other Gatherings.** To the extent practical, meetings will continue to be held using virtual tools. In-person meetings will require recommended social distancing (six feet) between participants and will include a limited number of attendees. Conference rooms and auditoriums will have modified seating and capacity controls to ensure social distancing.

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- **Workspace Redesign.** Open workspaces that do not allow at least six feet between employees may require that employees work onsite in shifts (telework/onsite), if possible, to allow for social distancing, or may require other mitigation strategies. Walk-up services will require the installation of sneeze shields and/or other appropriate safety barriers. This effort has already been initiated at HQ for security entrances and will be implemented as appropriate before each building service is reopened. Safety barriers will also be evaluated for use in the reception area of office suites.
- **Procure hygiene items and services.** DOE HQ will work to procure and install hand sanitizer stations at DOE facility entrances and high traffic areas in its office buildings, as needed. Consideration will also be given to procuring and installing additional touchless equipment such as soap dispensers, sink apparatus, or paper towel dispensers, especially at the Germantown building.
- **Post signage.** DOE HQ will increase its signage reminding employees to use proven hygiene practices and social distancing protocols, to stay home when ill, and to report any COVID-like symptoms.
- **COVID-19 Hotline Response Team.** The DOE COVID-19 Hotline Response Team will continue to monitor and report on possible or confirmed COVID-19 cases. For HQ, the Team will also assess potential cases, provide recommendations to supervisors for decision, and follow up on cases.

**Phase 1**

Personnel identified to return to the workplace in Phase 1 will be determined by the Head of the Departmental Element. This includes employees in mission-critical positions whose jobs can be better performed onsite than through telework. These include, for example, staff that need to perform their duties in classified workspace and those that are needed to support limited facility operations. Support service contractors may also be included. All others will remain on telework or WSL, as appropriate. Employees may not voluntarily return to the workplace without prior approval by the Head of Departmental Element.

Self-identified vulnerable federal employees, as well as those who live with or provide care for individuals in the vulnerable population, are not required to return to the workplace. However, employees who would be included in Phase 1 but for their vulnerability status may voluntarily return and will not be excluded from consideration based on the perceived or self-identified vulnerability status. Federal employees who are responsible for caregiving in instances where services are closed due to COVID-19, as defined in the Excused Absence for Caregiving, may also continue to telework.

Phase 1 federal employees are expected to return to the workplace upon notification by their supervisor after the Secretary has approved DOE HQ to move to Phase 1. Supervisors should give employees as much advanced notice as possible in order to make necessary preparations. These employees will also be provided with detailed information regarding return to workplace expectations and new protocols. In addition, information on the initiation of Phase 1 will be communicated via HQ DOECAST so that all DOE HQ employees are aware of the change in operating status. In addition to program mission activities, HQ staff offices may begin reopening support functions as appropriate (see Appendix A). Support service contractors will be notified that they have been identified to return to the workplace by their employer in coordination with the contracting officer.

DOE HQ will continue to monitor information on local conditions, including current state/local stay-at-home orders, school closings, day care closings, and availability of public transportation. The Secretary will determine when to move to Phase 2 based on suggested gating criteria and other considerations.

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**Phase 2**

Personnel identified to return to the workplace in Phase 2 will be determined by the Head of the Departmental Element. For Phase 2, additional returning personnel will include employees whose jobs are best performed onsite and can include senior leadership, staff supporting PMEFS and MEFs, or other high priority senior-level program staff, and associated support service contractors. These employees will receive advanced notification that they have been identified to return to the workplace in Phase 2. Support service contractors will be notified that they have been identified to return to the workplace by their employer in coordination with the contracting officer. Social distancing protocols will be reviewed and modified as necessary for Phase 2.

Phase 2 federal employees are expected to begin returning upon notification by their supervisor after the Secretary has approved DOE HQ to move to Phase 2. All others will remain on telework or WSL, as appropriate. Employees may not voluntarily return to the workplace without prior approval by the Head of Departmental Element. For planning purposes, it is assumed that Phase 2 will begin approximately two weeks after Phase 1. This information will also be communicated via HQ DOECAST so that all DOE HQ employees are aware of the change in the operating status.

Self-identified vulnerable federal employees, as well as those who live with or provide care for individuals in the vulnerable population, are not required to return to the workplace in Phase 2. However, employees who would be included in Phase 2 but for their vulnerability status may voluntarily return and will not be excluded from consideration based on their perceived or self-identified vulnerability status. Federal employees who are responsible for caregiving in instances where services are closed due to COVID-19, as defined in the Excused Absence for Caregiving, may continue to telework if not performing mission critical work that is required to be performed in a Federal facility.

DOE HQ will continue to collect information on local conditions, including current state/local stay-at-home orders, school and day care closures, and availability of public transportation. The Secretary will determine when to move to Phase 3 based on the suggested gating criteria and other considerations, including state/local conditions.

In addition to normal program mission activities, HQ staff offices will continue reopening support services as appropriate (see Appendix B). Also, social distancing protocols will be reviewed as necessary.

**Phase 3**

For Phase 3, unrestricted staffing of DOE HQ will resume. Employees will be notified via HQ DOECAST that DOE HQ has resumed normal operations and they are expected to return to the workplace. Support service contractors will be notified that they have been identified to return to the workplace by their employer in coordination with the contracting officer. All personnel will resume their pre-COVID-19 work schedules and telework agreements, as deemed appropriate by their supervisor. Requests for special accommodations by federal employees will be evaluated through the reasonable accommodation process on a case-by-case basis. Social distancing protocols will be reviewed.

Phase 3 employees are expected to begin returning upon notification by their supervisor. For planning purposes, it is assumed that Phase 3 will begin approximately 2 weeks after Phase 2.

DOE HQ will continue to monitor information on local conditions for evidence of any rebound and associated changes in state/local decisions. This information will be provided to appropriate leadership. In addition to normal program mission activities, HQ staff offices will reopen the remaining support services (see Appendix C).

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**Appendix A – Phase I Activities\***

**Key Services**

- Reestablish full-time executive transportation services, with vehicles modified to create barriers between drivers and passengers.
- Reestablish regular operations for courier services with continued use of distancing protocols including drivers traveling in separate vehicles.
- Reopen media production services and recording studio. Add barriers and protocol adjustments to maximize physical distancing.
- Provide guidance to employees regarding use of conference rooms, including those located within program office suites, and social distancing expectations.
- Increase operating hours for badging services, based on demand.
- Establish building entrance process that ensures social distancing can be maintained.
- Bring limited EITS staff onsite including Service Desk Tier 2 and Platinum, Asset Management, and Network Operations.

**Other Facilities Services**

- Initiate increased level of custodial services, to include reopening of restrooms, as re-occupancy increases. Continue to clean lobby areas daily. High touch areas are disinfected daily.
- Expand number of available elevators as re-occupancy increases.
- Begin responding to backlog of building operations routine service calls.
- Begin completing deferred routine building maintenance activities.
- Restart document imaging services, addressing backlog of requests.
- Determine process for deliveries, including the loading dock.

\*Phase 1 Activities will be continuously evaluated based on risk and demand. Adjustments will be made as necessary. If appropriate, some Phase 2 and 3 activities could be moved to Phase 1.

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**Appendix B – Phase 2 Activities\***

**Key Services**

- Reopen 4th floor snack bar (FORS) and Rick's (GTN) based on demand. Establish customer occupancy limits and keep dining areas closed. Initial restart will include take out only.
- Reopen Cafeteria/Dunkin/Subway based on demand for prepared food carryout only. Implement social distancing measures. Dining and gathering areas will remain closed until Phase 3.
- Allow visitors to come onsite but subject to enhanced entrance screening protocols, if applicable.
- Begin badging current employees who came on board during maximum telework and never received a badge.
- Begin delivery of mail, express mail, periodicals, packages and newspapers.
- Reopen supply stores implementing adjustments to shopping processes similar to grocery stores.
- Reestablish Shuttle Bus schedule beginning with limited runs based on demand. Will need barriers for the driver in place and blocked off seating to maintain physical distancing.
- Reopen travel management in-person services and return to standard approval processes.
- Begin bringing back contract support staff, based on demand, to manage additional vehicles expected in the FORS garage.
- Reopen staffed copy centers with remote customer submissions of requests and implementation of distancing protocols for pick-ups.

**Other Facilities Services**

- Begin major building maintenance projects that had been deferred.
- Begin work on deferred office moves, carpet requests, and painting requests.
- Restart building renovations construction projects. Work with programs to identify which projects should continue forward and which may need modifications based on potential changes to work environment (such as increased use of routine telework).
- Reopen escalators in FORS West Building when the cafeteria reopens.

\*Phase 2 Activities will be continuously evaluated based on risk and demand. Adjustments will be made as necessary. If appropriate, some Phase 2 activities may be moved to Phase 1 or 3.

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**Appendix C – Phase 3 Activities\***

**Key Services**

- Reopen cafeterias for self-serve and seating.
- Reestablish FORS garage parking operations, including elimination of contractor parking, and return to regular customer billing and day passes for non-permit holders.
- Reopen FOHO and GOHO. Will need to ensure strict physical distancing and sanitation protocols.
- Reopen Child Development Centers.
- Transition from Virtual Onboarding to in-person onboarding. Ensure those who attended virtual onboarding are included in complete New Employee Orientation and complete remaining paperwork (example: I-9 forms).
- Transition to in-person training, as appropriate. This will be dependent on social distancing protocols and availability of vendors.
- Resume drug testing program.
- Reengage with employees on Permanent Change of Station (PCS) plans.
- Evaluate regulatory relief provided to programs and determine if still required. Extend or retract as required.

**Other Facilities Services**

- Reopen barber services.
- Reopen in-person passport/visa services.
- Reopen burn bag services on a regular schedule.
- Reopen dry cleaning (FORS).
- Reopen furniture services and begin addressing deferred requests.
- Reopen graphics in-person services. Begin completing deferred requests including awards.
- Begin completing deferred actions on kitchenettes, to include evaluating changes that are needed to meet revised health and safety protocols.
- Reopen in-person property management services.
- Begin addressing backlog of deferred moving services.
- Reopen printing services and begin addressing backlog of requests.
- Begin completing deferred requests for passport and official photos.
- Ensure Tier-1 staff is prepared for surge in IT support calls as customers return onsite.
- Reconcile deployed EITS assets to ensure EITS loaner devices are properly accounted for. Loaners not returned will be charged to the customer organization as a permanent asset.

\*Phase 3 Activities will be continuously evaluated based on risk and demand. Adjustments will be made as necessary. If appropriate, some Phase 3 activities may be moved to Phases 1 or 2.