

COVID-19 Guidance for Supervisors – What to do when an AgriLife employee suspects they have COVID-19

Texas A&M AgriLife has successfully continued essential research while keeping the health and safety of our students, staff, and faculty our primary concern. We have been fortunate to only experience a few instances where employees or students have had symptoms of COVID-19. In each of those instances, appropriate precautions were taken. As we implement return to the workplace in waves, we should be prepared to respond should there be an increasing number of these cases.

The following guidance is provided to unit heads to help them effectively respond when an employee exhibits clinical signs but has not yet been diagnosed. The recommended steps require diligence and effort on the part of all to ensure their effectiveness - minimizing spread and protection of human lives takes precedent.

KEY POINTS

In addition to [guidance previously provided](#) on the AgriLife Coronavirus webpage (and also provided [here for Extension](#)), the following protocol should be followed as part of the response to a possible case of COVID-19 in the workplace:

1. A person exhibiting [symptoms associated with COVID-19](#) or who has been in close contact with a person with symptoms **should not be allowed in the workplace** and this event must be reported according to AgriLife procedures by [completing this online form](#). Please be sure to indicate that you are with AgriLife when prompted within the form. The individual exhibiting symptoms should be strongly encouraged to contact their health professional via telephone and follow the health care professional's recommendations.
2. Individuals will not be allowed to return to the workplace until they are no longer exhibiting symptoms for at least 14 days. (Note: the incidences of false negative test results are high enough that individuals who test negative should be encouraged to ask their health care professional about follow up testing and follow the advice given.) For specific information about HR policies and leave associated with COVID-19, [visit the AgriLife Coronavirus webpage](#).
3. After an employee with symptoms is identified, contact tracing should be performed to identify the potential risk of spread of infection. Contact tracing in the workplace begins with identifying every work colleague that a person recently diagnosed with COVID-19 has been in contact with since they became contagious. A person may be contagious 48 to 72 hours before they started to experience symptoms. [Information obtained in the form](#) should be used to ascertain from a minimum of 3 days prior to the start of symptoms, to the last time they were in the facility:
 - a. where the employee was in our facilities (including fields/greenhouses) and
 - b. other employees they may have been in contact with during this timeframe. These employees should be contacted and self-quarantine at home for 14 days from the last contact day with the ill employee/in same room/lab. They should be told what symptoms

to look out for, to contact their health care professional if they start to experience symptoms.

4. Once the physical locations where the individual was present are identified, entry to these areas by others should be restricted. The entire building/facility does not need to be closed. However, all rooms/labs/offices the individual visited during this timeframe should be quarantined until enhanced cleaning can be done. Cleaning should follow the [guidelines provided by the CDC](#). If located on the TAMU campus, SSC custodial services should be contacted at 979-845-3615. Other locations should either contact service providers they have contracted with to perform cleaning or perform the enhanced cleaning in house by strictly following [CDC enhanced cleaning guidance](#).

A REMINDER FOR CONTINUED GUIDANCE—

BE SAFE

All activities on AgriLife property will continue to follow social distancing guidelines as outlined by public health guidance and good health safety practices. As of the date of this document that entails the following:

- a. Maintain a minimum 6 feet from other people during meetings and in common areas.
- b. Wash your hands often with either soap or hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- c. Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.
- d. When in group meetings or if social distance cannot be maintained, wearing a mask or other face covering is encouraged.
- e. Masks are required in lab settings.

Employees are responsible for monitoring their health (symptoms, temperature checks) and should not go to the office if symptomatic or unwell. Employees who need to take extras precautions based on CDC guidelines will be evaluated on a case by case basis regarding their status of returning to on-site status.