



611 Broadway Avenue, Suite 10  
Wabasha, MN 55981  
Phone: (651) 565-4673

**To: Wabasha SWCD Board of Supervisors**  
**From: Terri Peters, District Manager**  
**Date: March 16, 2020 REVISED: March 24, 2020**  
**Re: COVID-19 Plan**

---

Offices are developing contingency plans to minimize work productivity reductions stemming from COVID-19. In some cases, individual staff members may be reacting to policies of other agencies and businesses that directly affect our spouses, partners, and colleagues.

**COVID- 19 Policies to Consider:**

**Implement Work-Place/Site Visit Screening:**

- I. **SECURITY SCREENING** - If the visitor is verified and scheduled, first point of contact will ask the visitor the following questions (these are already posted on the door):
- II. **UPDATE TO ABOVE SECURITY SCREENING 3/23/2020:** The Wabasha SWCD is co-located with NRCS. Visitors are no longer allowed in the USDA offices. Landowners are asked to conduct business by telephone or electronically. Staff are asking the following questions prior to site visits, confirming that the landowner is also comfortable with the visit and noting in the conservation notes.
  - A. Have you, someone living in your household, someone with you have been in close or frequent contact with, or someone you are caring for been diagnosed with COVID-19 (Coronavirus) or had any contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19?
  - B. In the last 14 days, have you or someone living in your household, or someone with you have been in close or frequent contact with, or someone you are caring for returned from, or made a travel connection through a CDC Level 3 or Level 2 country or State Department Level 3 or Level 4 country?
  - C. Do you currently have, or have you had within the last 24 hours, any cold or flu symptoms with a fever greater than 100.4 or acute respiratory distress (e.g., shortness of breath and coughing)?

**III. IMPLEMENT SOCIAL DISTANCING:**

- A. Don't attend non-essential functions and meetings – participate remotely if possible.
- B. When hosting meetings, provide a means of remote participation.
- C. Use remote communications technologies – email, Skype, phone, conference call.
- D. Minimize contact with the workspace of others.

- E. Minimize physical contact with others – alternatives to handshakes – wave, nod, verbal greeting, elbow bump.
- F. Use phones to talk with co-workers in the office
- G. Eat lunch alone at individual desks
- H. Stagger work schedules

#### **IV. STAFF SCHEDULE AND LEAVE ADJUSTMENT**

- A. WORK SCHEDULE ROTATION (currently being implemented) - In an attempt to comply with recommendations from the National Conservation Partnership, limit the number of SWCD staff in the office on a rotation schedule.
- B. The District Manager will coordinate with staff to attempt to limit to 2 (of 4) SWCD staff in the office at any time.
- C. Staff out of the office while working (field visits, working from home, ...) will not count against this limit, and staff will be allowed to work flexible hours including evenings and weekends to complete their work duties.
- D. Employees will be allowed to use any available leave in order reach a 40-hour work week.
- E. Employees are trusted to log hours worked only to the extent that they were productive hours when working remotely and goals and deliverables of such work hours will be reported both on time sheets and with regular communication to the District Manager.

#### **V. DIRECT EMPLOYEES WITH COLD OR FLU SYMPTOMS TO STAY HOME:**

- A. For COVID-19 related absences that extend beyond three business days, allow employees to use Extended Medical Benefit (EMB) for that portion in excess of three days absence. EMB is currently restricted to FMLA qualifying events, which would also require treatment by a health care provider two or more times. The Treatment requirement would be waived temporarily as part of this COVID-19 Policy.
- B. In the event that a regular eligible\* employee exhausts all Annual Leave, Sick Leave and Comp Time reserves, they may request in writing to receive an advance on Annual Leave up to 10 days paid leave for COVID-19 related absences. The request must acknowledge that advanced hours will be deducted from future accruals and that in the event that an employee separates from employment with Wabasha SWCD any remaining deficit of FTO hours will be deducted from the employee's last paycheck. The District Manager may approve the request. Employees not eligible for FMLA may also make the same request for EMB to be deducted from future accruals, final paycheck or payable to the District.

#### **Who is Eligible for FMLA? \*305 of Employee Policy Manual – FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE ACT**

- A. Employees are eligible for the unpaid leave if they have worked for Wabasha SWCD for at least one year, and for 1,250 hours over the previous twelve (12) month period. Wabasha SWCD uses the "Rolling Backward" method to determining the twelve-month period during which an employee may take FMLA leave; this means that the twelve (12) months prior to the first anticipated date of the leave will determine if the employee is eligible for leave.

## **VI. SITE SANITATION AND HYGIENE:**

- A. Frequently wipe down often-used surfaces – tables, door handles, faucets, light switches – all staff should take the initiative on this but one will be assigned the task to undertake several times daily. (Currently being done by staff available at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., at least)
- B. All staff frequently and thoroughly wash hands
- C. Cough or sneeze into your elbow
- D. Don't touch your face
- E. Wabasha SWCD provides cleansing wipes – subject to availability
- F. Wabasha SWCD provides hand sanitizer and/or wipes - subject to availability
- G. Provide masks if requested – subject to availability

Other measures deemed practical by the District Manager and are consistent with the evolving guidance provided by professionals (CDC, MDH).

## **VII. District Manager Authorization**

- A. The District Manager is hereby directed to use professional judgment to approve items that are typically approved by Wabasha County SWCD Board with the exception of items that require Board approval. Said delegation of authority shall be limited to those actions that are necessary to maintain SWCD operations, move forward programs approved by the board, and that do not require expenditure of SWCD funds beyond approved budgets except in emergency situations. Items that require Board approval will be consolidated to a monthly meeting. At that meeting the District Manager will bring a list of items and supporting documentation of items that were approved for the Board's acknowledgement and ratification of those approvals. Should there be any items that the District Manager is unclear on the Board's direction he will consult with the Board Chair and Vice Chair to get direction prior to taking action. Those items and supporting documentation of items that were approved will also be brought for Board's acknowledgement of those approvals. During this pandemic the District Manager is directed to not have regularly scheduled in person meetings.
- B. DISTRICT MANAGER WILL CONTINUE TO MONITOR STATE AND FEDERAL PROGRAM OFFERINGS OF ASSISTANCE FOR STAFF RETENTION/PAY.

**Staff Recommendation:** Adopt all COVID-19 policies above to be in effect through April 30, 2020, or shorten/lengthen according to guidance released by State/Federal Officials. All current information regarding COVID-19 recommendations will be evaluated ongoing and communicated to the board by the District Manager.

Approved by board on: \_\_\_\_\_

Board signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**REQUEST FOR SICK LEAVE ADVANCE  
During a Declared Public Health Emergency**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

I am requesting an advance of sick leave hours because:

\_\_\_\_ I am experiencing symptoms consistent with the declared public health emergency, or I am needed to care for a covered family member\* experiencing these symptoms; or I am needed to provide care for a child unable to attend school or daycare due to closure during the public health emergency; and

\_\_\_\_ I am within the period the SWCD Board has declared this policy to be active; and I have exhausted all of my accumulated sick leave, vacation leave, and compensatory time;

*And*

\_\_\_\_ I have not already received the maximum advance of hours based on my regular work schedule.

*\*Under the Minnesota Sick & Safe Leave Law, covered family members are: minor child, adult child, spouse, sibling, parent, mother-in-law, father-in-law, grandchild, grandparent or stepparent.*

The number of sick leave hours I am requesting is: \_\_\_\_\_ (*number requested may not exceed your bi-weekly scheduled hours*).

\_\_\_\_ I agree that the actual number of hours within the maximum specified above will be limited to the actual number of hours needed for this purpose and that they may not be accumulated or used for any other purpose.

\_\_\_\_ I agree that if sick leave hours are advanced to me, the equivalent number of hours will be deducted from future accruals and that I will not have new accrued hours added to my sick leave balance until the advanced hours have been fully paid back.

\_\_\_\_ I agree that if I separate from Wabasha SWCD employment before the advanced hours are fully paid back, The SWCD will deduct the value of those hours (number of hours owed times my hourly rate of pay at separation) from my last paycheck.

Employee Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPROVALS:**

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_ Denied: \_\_\_\_\_ – Reason:

Manager Signature: \_\_\_\_\_