



Montana Association of Counties

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OPERATIONAL & WORKPLACE GUIDANCE IN RESPONSE TO NOVEL CORONAVIRUS

The information below provides counties, boards, and commissions with guidelines on preparing for and responding to issues and questions related to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). These guidelines may be adjusted as we continue to learn more about the spread and impacts of COVID-19. We encourage you to develop your own guidelines and policies in cooperation with your local health officials and resources and only offer this as a template for your consideration. **PLEASE NOTE THAT FEDERAL AND STATE GUIDANCE IS CHANGING RAPIDLY**, so the links in the document should be used regularly.

Updated information from CDC is imbedded in the links below and the main source of federal policy information can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>.

The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services is maintaining an updated Coronavirus site at <https://dphhs.mt.gov/publichealth/cdepi/diseases/coronavirusmt>.

Governor Bullock declared a State of Emergency in Montana and information related to the Emergency Declaration can be found at <https://dphhs.mt.gov/aboutus/news/2020/stateofemergencydeclared>.

OFFICE OPERATIONS

- **MASKS ARE MANDATORY PER THE JULY 15, 2020 GOVERNOR'S DIRECTIVE.**
 - *Public buildings are included in the mandate and as such, public facilities should have masks available to ensure that essential business can be conducted in accordance with the Directive.*
- Managers and supervisors must encourage employees to remain home when they are sick.
- Take steps to maximize telework options for as many employees as possible. For employees who do not ordinarily telecommute, ask supervisors to identify tasks that employees can do remotely, or provide alternative options for telecommuting, if circumstances later necessitate an expansion of telework.
- Ensure each of your worksites are taking steps to maintain high environmental hygiene standards by cleaning surfaces with EPA-approved environmental disinfectants. In particular, routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, countertops and doorknobs. If feasible, provide disposable disinfectant wipes so that commonly used services can be wiped down by employees before each use.
- Remember that [MCA 7-4-2211 \(2\)](#) requires "The sheriff, the county clerk, the clerk of the district court, the treasurer, the county attorney, the county auditor (in counties in which that officer is maintained), and the county assessor shall keep their offices open for the transaction of business during the office hours determined by the governing body by resolution after a public hearing and only if consented to by any affected elected county officer, every day in the year except legal holidays and Saturdays."

Should an incident or occurrence make staffing and operations impossible, we recommend the governing body declare an emergency under [MCA 10-3-4](#).

- For agencies with regular public interface, post signs and resources to address non-pharmaceutical interventions and consider further efforts to mitigate exposure, especially for individuals showing symptoms. [Click here to view resources](#).

GUIDANCE ON COUNTY COURT FACILITIES

- Chief Justice McGrath has issued guidance for District Court Operations in a series of [memos found here](#).
- Standardized signage should be considered for all people entering the building. Signage should include language directing symptomatic to go home and the ability to pay fines through CitePay without physically entering the building.
- **Masks must be worn at all times while in public facilities. Masks should be provided to ensure that essential business can be conducted in accordance with the Governor's Directive.**
- Physical distancing in courthouses, courtrooms and offices must be maintained.
- Hand sanitizer must be widely available in public spaces and in courtrooms throughout the buildings. Detailed plans for disinfecting and cleaning throughout the day must be in place and adhered to.

GUIDANCE WHEN CONSIDERING OFFICE CLOSURES

- Decisions on office closure are to be made in consultation with the impacted elected official when possible. For offices housed with multiple agencies, impacted directors are to coordinate with each other prior to closure. In the event an office is significantly impacted and is also listed in [MCA 7-4-2211 \(2\)](#) be aware of the requirement to declare an emergency prior to closure of the office. Essential functions of the office must be maintained as part of your Continuity of Operations Plan.
- When determining whether to close an office please consider several factors, including:
 - Impact to the mission and public.
 - Risk to employees and public of remaining open.
 - Alternatives to continue effective operations (remote location, telecommuting).
 - Span of impacted area or potential for further contamination.
 - Impact of closure on employees and public.
 - Ability to conduct a partial closure of office.

HOW SHOULD OUR ORGANIZATION NAVIGATE QUESTIONS ON POSSIBLE EXPOSURE?

The steps an organization should take when an employee reports a possible exposure to COVID-19 will depend upon the specific circumstances, yet employers are asked to err on the side of caution. When preparing for navigating issues related to exposure, please follow the steps below:

First, get familiar with existing CDC risk assessment resources. These resources should be reviewed immediately. The first link provides details on the factors and customary CDC interventions an organization should take; [click here to review the document](#). The second link is decision matrix to help assess the appropriate employer interventions; [click here to review the decision matrix](#). Information in these documents will assist with providing some detail on the factors and possible employer interventions.

Second, consult with your local health jurisdiction to assess next steps. [Access to state resources and contact information can be found here](#).

Third, based on the advice of the local health jurisdiction, take appropriate action, if any. If the employee is directed to stay away from the workplace, take steps to determine if remote work is an option while the employee is away from the office and able to work. If the employee is unable to work remotely, explore leave options for the employee. Agencies should administer leave in accordance with the employee leave provisions of their applicable collective bargaining agreement or rules.

Note: If working with an employee confirmed to have COVID-19 infection, agencies should inform employees of their possible exposure in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act and/or HIPAA.

QUARANTINE

- Prior to taking any specific action regarding office closure, work restrictions, or quarantine, we urge you to consult with your health department staff/health officer/board of health and County Attorney's Office.
- **[MCA 50-1-204](#) Quarantine and isolation measures.** The department may adopt and enforce quarantine or isolation measures to prevent the spread of communicable disease. A person who does not comply with quarantine measures shall, on conviction, be fined not less than \$10 or more than \$100. Receipts from fines, except justice's court fines, must be deposited in the state general fund.
- Additional information on Montana-specific corona virus issues can be found at <https://dphhs.mt.gov/publichealth/cdepi/diseases/coronavirusmt>.

