

# COVID-19 PREPAREDNESS PLAN FOR MINNESOTA OFFICES

**Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD)/Houston Engineering, Inc. (HEI)** is committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace for all our employees and our visitors. To ensure that, we have developed the following COVID-19 Preparedness Plan in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Managers and employees are all responsible for implementing this plan. Our goal is to mitigate the potential for transmission of COVID-19 in our workplaces, which requires cooperation among our employees, management, and clients. Only through this cooperative effort can we establish and maintain the safety and health of our workplaces.

Our people are our most important asset. We are serious about safety and health and keeping our employees working at BRRWD/HEI. - This COVID-19 Preparedness Plan follows Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) guidelines, Federal OSHA standards related to COVID-19, and Minnesota Executive Order 20-56.

## The plan addresses:

- policies and procedures regarding sick workers;
- engineering and administrative controls for social distancing;
- hygiene and source controls;
- workplace building and ventilation protocols;
- workplace housekeeping, including cleaning, disinfecting and decontamination;
- visitor controls and protections for drop-off, pick-up and delivery;
- communications and training for employees and supervision provided by managers.

## 1 COVID-19 FACTS

### 1.1 WHAT IS IT?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are known to cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Severe Acute Respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). COVID-19 is a new strain of coronavirus that has not been previously identified in humans. What are the COVID-19 Symptoms?

Reported illnesses have ranged from mild symptoms to severe illness and death for confirmed coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) cases.

Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure:

- Cough
- Fever
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Repeated shaking with chills
- Sore throat
- Shortness of breath
- Muscle pain

## 1.2 HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
- Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.
- COVID-19 may be spread by people who are not showing symptoms (Asymptomatic – Recent MN model updates show 30-45% of people with COVID-19 do not have symptoms but can still spread the virus).

## 1.3 HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS?

- Wear a mask to stop respiratory droplets from spreading and being inhaled.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating, and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Seek medical attention if you have symptoms of coronavirus or influenza. Call your healthcare provider before visiting a healthcare facility.
- Stay home from work until all these three things have happened:
  - You have had no fever for at least 72 hours (that is three full days of no fever without the use of medicine that reduces fevers),
  - Other symptoms have improved (for example, when your cough or shortness of breath have improved), and
  - At least 7 days have passed since your symptoms first appeared.
- **YOU** play an important role in stopping the spread of germs. We are all relying on each other to ensure our overall safety and the safety of our loved ones as it relates to the COVID-19 virus.

## 2 POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Employees have been informed of and encouraged to self-monitor for signs and symptoms of COVID-19. The following policies and procedures are being implemented to assess employee health status prior to entering the workplace and for employees to report when they are sick or experiencing symptoms.

Those who can accomplish their work remotely and/or have complications related to COVID-19 (preexisting conditions, family vulnerability, childcare, etc.) should work from their home and follow the working remotely guidelines previously provided, staying on task with regular communication.

Those who work in the office will see changes in place and are expected to maintain a variety of practices outlined in this plan to ensure health and safety.

### 2.1 DAILY CHECK-IN SCREENING

Employees are required to answer screening questions prior to coming into the office. Specifically, if they have been in close contact with anyone diagnosed with COVID-19 or are experiencing any of the following symptoms since their last day at work that is not attributed to another health condition.

- Fever (100.4° F or higher), or feeling feverish;
- Chills;
- A new cough or sore throat;
- Shortness of breath;
- New muscle aches (not attributed to physical activity);
- New headache (not attributed to a known condition); or
- New loss of smell or taste.

### 2.2 SYMPTOMS WHEN AT THE WORKPLACE

Employees who are already in the workplace when they start to feel symptoms that are listed in the morning health screening must immediately leave the premises, notify their supervisor, office manager, and Human Resources (HR), and follow [CDC guidelines on What to Do If You Are Sick](#). HR will talk with the employee. The Administrative Assistant will initiate disinfecting of the employee's workstation and any surfaces touched during the day. The Office Manager will notify all personnel in the office that an employee went home sick and disinfecting has occurred.

### 2.3 EMPLOYEE LEAVE

BRRWD/HEI has implemented leave policies that promote employees staying at home when they are sick, when household members are sick, or when required by a health care provider to [isolate or quarantine](#) themselves or a member of their household. For non-worked time, PTO or unpaid leave may be used. The government has also implemented paid leave for confirmed COVID-19 illnesses and paid leave that may apply in cases of lack of childcare due to COVID-19.

## **2.4 QUARANTINE**

BRRWD/HEI has also implemented a policy to inform employees if they have been exposed to a person with COVID-19 in the workplace which will result in a required quarantine for a set period. If an employee tests positive for COVID-19 who was in the workplace within 48 hours of experiencing symptoms, all employees who had close contact with the employee will be notified and required to quarantine for 14 days. Close contact is defined as:

- having face-to-face contact (within 6 feet) for 15 minutes or more (cumulative) with someone known to have COVID-19, while that person was or may have been infectious, including in the 48 hours before their symptoms started, or
- sharing a closed space (conference room, break room, individual office or similar) for more than two hours with someone known to have COVID-19, while that person was or may have been infectious, including in the 48 hours before their symptoms started.

## **2.5 FLEXIBLE SCHEDULE**

Employees can request a reduced work schedule or unpaid leave provided project work and client commitments are being fulfilled. For exempt employees wanting a reduced work schedule, the employee's supervisor must contact Human Resources (HR) in advance of any change. For those on a reduced work schedule, participation in employee benefit plans will remain unchanged.

## **2.6 SOCIAL DISTANCING**

Employees are prohibited from gathering in groups where proper social distancing, as defined below, cannot reasonably be maintained. In addition, employees are prohibited from using other employees' personal protective equipment, phones, computer equipment, desks, cubicles, workstations, or offices without proper disinfection. Sharing tools is to be avoided whenever possible. When they are shared, users are required to disinfect them before sharing or wear work gloves as protection.

Social distancing is being implemented in the workplace through the following engineering and administrative controls:

- Employees are encouraged to work remotely and/or implement a staggered work schedule if deemed possible based on conversations with their supervisor and management.
- Employees are instructed to remain 6 feet apart and take measures to avoid passing others in hallways as much as possible.
- Employees should also refrain from entering small rooms together, whether it be conference rooms (exceeding designated occupancy), offices, or workstations.
- If you are speaking to a colleague, use the entrance to their workspace (office or workstation) as a spacing guide and avoid entering their personal space.
- Some conference rooms may be closed. Conference rooms that remain open are set up for 6-foot distancing. Refer to the Appendix for office-specific information.
- At offices that allow visitors, employees are responsible to coordinate entry with clients and instruct them on office procedures to ensure social distancing and personal hygiene precautions are followed.

## 2.7 FACE COVERINGS (MASKS)

Wearing a mask or other face covering is required as follows:

- Indoors except when alone in an office or in a cubicle with walls higher than the face.
- When carpooling.
- Outdoors when proper social distancing cannot be achieved.

Face coverings will be supplied by the company (in the case of cloth masks, 2 per employee and the employee is responsible for additional masks if needed).

Refer to the Appendix for office-specific information.

## 2.8 PERSONAL HYGIENE

Employees are [instructed to wash their hands](#) for at least 20 seconds with soap and water frequently throughout the day, but especially at the beginning of their shift, prior to any mealtimes and after using the bathroom.

Hand-sanitizer (composed of at least 60% alcohol) may be used for hand hygiene in place of soap and water if hands are not visibly soiled. If used, dispensers will be placed strategically at locations such as copiers, break rooms, and other common areas used by multiple people. The Administrative Assistant, or the Office Manager where no administrative staff is present, will monitor and restock necessary supplies.

Employees and visitors must cover their mouths and noses with their sleeves or a tissue when coughing or sneezing and avoid touching their faces, specifically their mouths, noses and eyes, with their hands. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash, followed by immediate hand washing or sanitizing.

Respiratory etiquette will be demonstrated on posters and supported by making tissues and trash receptacles available to all employees and visitors. Refer to the Appendices for examples of signage.

## 2.9 DATA PRIVACY

A policy has been implemented to protect the privacy of employees' health status and health information. Supervisors do not share such information with anyone except HR. HR maintains medical information separate from general personnel files.

# 3 HOUSEKEEPING AND MISCELLANEOUS

## 3.1 HOUSEKEEPING

There is a difference between cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting. Cleaning removes dust and debris from a surface. Sanitizing reduces the bacteria identified on the product's label (note: COVID-19 is not bacterial). Only disinfecting destroys or inactivates both the bacteria and viruses on hard, nonporous surfaces. BRRWD/HEI is providing a disinfectant effective against COVID-19.

Disinfectants supplied will list human coronavirus as a target pathogen per the [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Pesticide Registration, List N](#). Label instructions will be followed when using them.

Disinfecting of high-touch areas will be conducted at least twice per workday, including copiers, cabinet handles, shared keyboards, touch screens, door handles, railings, and countertops (in the morning and mid-afternoon). Our contracted janitorial services are also disinfecting areas they clean on their contracted schedule (after work hours). In addition to these regular housekeeping practices being implemented, employees are instructed to disinfect common work surfaces prior to using them.

All supplies are maintained as noted in the Appendix. Employees needing more supplies should contact the responsible party listed.

The workstation of any employee who calls in sick with symptoms of COVID-19 within 72 hours of being in the office will be disinfected by the responsible party listed in the Appendix. Similarly, the workstation of any employee who leaves the office due to symptoms of COVID-19 will be disinfected immediately.

### **3.2 WATER DISPENSERS**

Where drinking fountain and/or water dispensers are available, employees are instructed to wipe buttons/levers with disinfectant prior to dispensing water or to use a clean tissue or paper towel between their hands and any handles/equipment touched.

### **3.3 COFFEE**

Where provided, employees making coffee are required to thoroughly wash their hands prior to doing so. Those pouring coffee are instructed to wipe handles/buttons/equipment with disinfectant prior to touching them or to use a clean paper towel or tissue between their hands and any handles/buttons/equipment touched.

### **3.4 RESTROOMS**

Where possible, wastebaskets will be positioned near exit doors so a paper towel can be used when grabbing the handle and immediately discarded. Alternatively, door opening foot-grabs may be installed so the door can be opened without touching the handle.

### **3.5 VISITORS**

A sign is placed at each public entrance instructing all visitors to the office (other than for deliveries) to wear a mask and wash their hands or use hand sanitizer immediately upon entering the facility.

Visitors needing a pen will be given a new one upon arrival and advised to take it with them when they leave.

### **3.6 DROP-OFF, PICK-UP AND DELIVERY**

There is signage at entrances to direct deliveries. Refer to the Appendix for office-specific information.

### **3.7 WORKPLACE BUILDING AND VENTILATION**

Refer to Appendix A for office-specific information.

## **4 COMMUNICATION AND TRAINING**

### **4.1 AWARENESS**

This COVID-19 Preparedness Plan was communicated to all employees at Minnesota offices through email. A digital copy can be found on the Health and Safety page of the internal web, and a hard copy is posted on the bulletin board at each office.

### **4.2 INITIAL TRAINING**

Training on the plan was provided through the company's online learning management system. The specific information found in the Appendices will be communicated by the Office Manager in a format that best suits their situations.

All applicable training will be provided to new hires as part of our New Employee Orientation process and any other employees who did not receive the initial training.

### **4.3 PLAN ADAPTATIONS**

Supervisors are advised to provide feedback to their Office Managers on how effective the program is being implemented. The Office Manager will provide this information to the Director of Operations. This is a dynamic situation and as we adapt accordingly, additional communication, plan modifications, and training will be conducted.

## 5 CONCLUDING STATEMENT

All of us share a responsibility for this COVID-19 Preparedness Plan in order to maintain a safe and healthy workplace. Successfully implementing this plan will largely depend on staff behavior. We each have the power to control our own actions and help make our workspaces safe and productive. Each employee is responsible for maintaining their own personal hygiene, proper distancing, and staying home from work if they are sick.

If someone is not giving you enough space, politely ask them to adjust their distance. If someone requests this of you, do not take it personally, and do your best to comply. Workplace bullying is never allowed, but it is particularly unacceptable in this situation. Staff may not joke, tease, or make passive-aggressive statements implying someone is sick or not distancing properly. In this time, we will need to be direct and respectful to all to build trust with coworkers. If you see bullying, kindly point it out to your colleague(s) and ask them to stop. If the behavior persists, alert your office manager of the situation.

Mental health is important, and we are all operating under an extremely challenging situation. If you are feeling anxious about continuing to work from home or returning to the workplace, be honest with what you're feeling. Any feelings are okay during this time! There are a variety of mental health resources available whether you live in [Minnesota](#), [North Dakota](#), [South Dakota](#), or [Iowa](#). You may also want to confide in a trusted friend or mentor for support. Investing in your mental health is just as important as protecting physical health during this time.

Certified by:

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Jeff LeDoux, President/CEO  
Houston Engineering, Inc.

Certified by:



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Kathleen K. Fenger, Interim Administrator  
Buffalo-Red River Watershed District

## **APPENDIX A – BARNESVILLE OFFICE**

### **1 GENERAL**

The Barnesville office is open using a phased approach to limit the number of people in the office. During the phased reopening, many things about our day-to-day environment will change to ensure the safety of employees. The company has invested in tools to help reduce the risk of the virus spreading among staff. In return, we expect employees to also commit to safety by using the provided supplies effectively, following the plan, respecting guidelines, and changing behavior as needed to reduce spread of the virus.

### **2 VISITORS AND DELIVERIES**

The Barnesville Office is open to visitors. Signage on the door alerts visitors of this circumstance. Mail will continue to be handled through the Post Office and the Office PO Box.

A similar process is in-place for all other delivery carriers. The signage instructs them to leave items in the outside the door. The delivery can be placed outside the entrance vestibule. If a signature is required, the Administrative Assistant will wear a mask and process the delivery.

All deliveries will be disinfected before being distributed. The Administrative Assistant will wash their hands after disinfecting the mail and prior to distribution.

### **3 BUILDING SYSTEMS**

The Barnesville Office at 1303 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE, Barnesville is owned and maintained by the Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD). The BRRWD is responsible for maintenance of the building systems inclusive of the HVAC systems.

Throughout the “Stay at Home” period required by the Governor of Minnesota, the building systems remained in operation, and only one staff worked from the Office mainly to address spring flooding issues. The contracted commercial cleaner continues to clean and disinfect the office every other week.

## 4 TASK RESPONSIBILITIES

Task	Responsible Party
Communicate this location-specific appendix	Kathleen Fenger
On days our offices are open, before reporting to work for the day, employees must submit responses to questions related to whether they'll be in the office that day and if so, answer screening questions.	<p>Employees must submit their responses each day by 8:00 AM and will not be allowed to remain in the office without doing so.</p> <p>Anyone answering yes to any screening questions must stay home and follow <a href="#">CDC guidelines on What to Do If You Are Sick or Caring for Someone Sick at Home</a>.</p> <p>Kathleen will follow up with employees who don't respond by 8:00 AM.</p>
Disinfecting commonly touched surfaces	Julie Jerger/RaeAnn Berg
Disinfecting the workstation of an employee who goes home sick	Julie Jerger/RaeAnn Berg
Signage placement	Julie Jerger/RaeAnn Berg
Post a hard copy of this plan in the kitchen	Julie Jerger/RaeAnn Berg

## 5 RESOURCES

Resource	Responsible Party	Location
Supplies – disinfectant, hand sanitizer, nitrile gloves	Julie Jerger/RaeAnn Berg	Supply closet
Masks – 2 per employee with employee responsible for additional	Kathleen Fenger	Obtain directly from Kathleen

## 6 OFFICE SPACES

### 6.1 MEETING ROOM

1. The Meeting Room has reduced seating to allow for social distancing. We can currently seat up to Twenty-five (25) people in this room.
2. Please make sure to use the available spray and wipes to sanitize the following items once your meeting is over:
  - a. Keyboard
  - b. Mouse
  - c. TV Remote
  - d. Chair Arms
  - e. Table
  - f. Handles of Door
  - g. Light Switch
2. **Note:** While this room has been reopened for meetings, before you use this room, consider whether your meeting could be held via Teams instead.

### 6.2 PRINT ROOM

1. Employees should practice social distancing in the print room.
2. Make sure to use the spray and wipes provided to clean any surface areas you touch while in the room. These may include:
  - a. Phone
  - b. Copy Machine
  - c. Cabinet handles
  - d. Print room countertops

### 6.3 RESTROOMS

1. Paper towels are provided in the restrooms. This allows you to open the door using your hand without touching the handle.
2. We have placed garbage cans next to the doors, giving you the option to use paper towels to limit contact with the handle surface. Open the door with a paper towel and then dispose of it in the garbage can.

### 6.4 KITCHEN AND WATER COOLER

1. Employees should practice social distancing in the kitchen and water cooler area.
2. No seating is provided in the kitchen to encourage social distancing. Consider phasing your lunch, i.e. 12:00, 12:15, 12:30 to limit contact with others in a common space.
3. Employees need to disinfect the kitchen area with the spray and wipes provided once they have used it. This includes:

- a. Refrigerator door handles
  - b. Microwave door panels
  - c. Kitchen counters
  - d. Sink and faucet
  - e. Kitchen tables
4. Employees will need to disinfect the water cooler before each use using the spray and wipes provided.

## 7 VEHICLES

1. When traveling for work you should limit the vehicles to one (1) person.