

## NWFSC Pandemic Disease Policy (22 September 2009)

During a pandemic (worldwide) disease outbreak, the NWFSC will implement a social distancing policy at all affected research sites, consistent with the guidance in the NOAA Pandemic Influenza Annex to the Continuity of Operations Plan, and augmented by direction from local health authorities.

The NWFSC Pandemic Coordinator is the OMI Director. The Pandemic Team is as follows:

- The OMI Director
- The Administrative Officer
- The Facilities Managers
- The IT Manager
- The Program & Management Analyst (HR Advisor)
- The Maintenance Supervisor
- The Safety and Environmental Compliance Officer
- The Environmental Protection Specialist

NWFSC's social distancing policy includes the following elements:

### **1. *Communication.***

Communication is critical to the success of the NWFSC pandemic plan. Therefore, there are several ways that we can ensure that communication is maintained:

- The NWFSC public website will contain a link to the Pandemic Flu page. The Pandemic Flu webpage will contain updates as these are received from critical sources: NOAA Homeland Security Program Office, applicable county health departments, CDC, WHO, Federal Occupational Health, and the Office of Personnel Management. In addition, the website will provide information about any/ all site closures and subsequent re-openings.
- The NWFSC emergency number, (877) 889-2001 will be used to inform staff regarding the status all of the NWFSC sites (i.e. closed or no status change).
- Telephone or E-mail communication regarding the decision to implement social distancing and other issues will be maintained through the management structure or phone tree, from the Office of the Science Director to Division Directors, Program Managers and their staff. Conversely, employees and other staff need to communicate with their direct supervisors when illness or other issues develop.
- For research stations outside of the Montlake campus, if a site closure is directed by a local, state or federal health department action or recommendation, the Facility

Manager needs to alert senior Center Management. Senior Center Management will make the decision to close the research station and this will be communicated to personnel by the affected Divisions and the Facility Manager. Notification of local staff will be accomplished through phone tree communication and E-mail. Once Senior Center Management, in consultation with local site senior staff, has determined the facility can be reopened, this will be communicated to the affected local staff by the Facility Manager and the affected Divisions.

## ***2. Social Distancing***

The main defense and containment approach recommended by public officials for an influenza outbreak is social distancing (reducing the frequency, proximity and duration of contact between people). The need for social distancing is based on scientific knowledge of how the influenza virus spreads, primarily through person-to-person transmission. During a pandemic flu emergency, social distancing calls for site closure that suspends all but Essential Functions. The decision to close the site (isolating NWFSC staff by requiring them not to report to their respective duty station) will be made by the Office of the Science Director based on consultation with the applicable county health department, and with the NOAA Western Regional Office, the Seattle Federal Executive Board, Fisheries and NOAA management, and other organizations (such as Oregon State University for the Newport Research Station) as necessary. Since each NWFSC site is geographically distant, site closures will be made on a site-by-site basis.

- Regardless of the status of the site, staff members who are sick with any contagious disease or have sick family members who are contagious must not report to work. *Even if it is not known whether or not an illness to self or family member is contagious or related to an influenza pandemic, that staff member must not report to work.* Affected staff members must communicate issues to their direct supervisors immediately, so that decisions can be made regarding time and attendance and project management.
- Staff may be impacted by the pandemic prior to the site officially closing (such as specific school closures). Affected staff members must communicate issues to their direct supervisors immediately, so that decisions can be made regarding time and attendance and project management.
- In accordance with the NOAA Pandemic Influenza Annex to the Continuity of Operations Plan, a written telework agreement and a safety checklist of the alternative office must be completed prior to an employee working away from the traditional office. In conjunction with the signed telework agreement, for individuals identified to perform essential functions at an alternative site like home during a pandemic, the supervisor will have a description of each employee's responsibilities along with the

infrastructure and technological support that will be provided. NOAA's policy is located at: <http://www.wfm.noaa.gov/pdfs/Telework-Policy-no-forms.pdf>.

- OPM regulations allow an agency to direct any employee to work from another location for the duration of the emergency and make a temporary exception to the requirement that an employee must report into the work site at least once a week, on a regular and recurring basis. This exception allows the employee to continue to telework and receive his or her locality rate for the regular worksite.
- Leave status for FTE's who are not on the critical personnel list must conform to the guidance issued by the Office of Personnel Management (<http://www.opm.gov/pandemic/>). Contractors are not authorized to perform duties during site closures. Site closure days will be considered non-working (non-pay) days.
- Information on remote access to critical systems (e.g. Travel Manager and Web TA) will be posted on NWFSC's Pandemic webpage.
- Access to VPN should be kept to a minimum while working at a remote location. Users should log out of their VPN account once they have completed the task requiring a connection to the NWFSC network.
- Official travel to areas where there are warnings by CDC shall be evaluated on a case-by-case basis if the travel is deemed essential. If it is in accordance with CDC recommendations, non-essential government travel to warning areas will be curtailed until CDC changes its guidance.

### **3. *Essential Functions***

During a pandemic emergency, essential functions will be defined by senior management responsible for continuity of operations. These shall include but are not limited to the following:

- a. Support the viability of research animals
- b. Maintain the security of pathogens, radiological materials, and select agents
- c. Respond to emergencies such as hazardous chemical incidents
- d. Maintain safe, secure and hazard free sites
- e. Maintain a minimal or basic communication system
- f. Provide fit-testing for respirators
- g. Provide vehicle maintenance and fueling for vehicles and small boats
- h. Maintain servers and critical software systems
- i. Carryout responsibilities related to preserving assets

Under the essential functions guidelines, minimal utilities will be supplied to buildings. All routine, normal daily housekeeping and maintenance activities will cease until such a time when the reopening of NWFSC sites has been announced. Where possible, sites will be secured in a way to prevent re-entry by all but approved essential employees. Most research activities that depend on on-site facilities will be suspended as well. Security, safety, maintenance, and a small number of other essential employees will be available to maintain safe, secure and hazard-free sites. In all cases, the manner in which essential employees conduct themselves in transit to and from and while on NWFSC sites will be done as to minimize their exposure to others who may be carrying the virus. Essential functions may be redefined by Center management as the pandemic emergency evolves.

#### ***4. Essential Personnel***

Programs shall identify personnel who need to support essential functions during the pandemic emergency. Essential personnel may be able to perform their work at home and/ or will be called in only when there is a need. Once divisions identify essential personnel who may be required to report to the site, these individuals will be included in the Respiratory Protection Program (obtain medical qualification, participate in training and fit-testing) and provided with respirators that will cover a 60-day period of time. The minimum respiratory protection is an N95 disposable respirator for essential personnel. Essential employees with facial hair must either shave or be equipped with a powered-air purifying respirator with HEPA (High Efficiency Particulate Arresting) filter cartridges. If worn during a pandemic emergency, half-mask and full-face air-purifying respirators must also be equipped with HEPA or P100 cartridges.

Program Managers will coordinate the schedules of essential employees to ensure that there are no overlaps of personnel times, and the total time on the site is kept to a minimum.

#### ***5. Disciplinary Action***

NWFSC employees and other staff members not complying with this policy will be subject to disciplinary action.

#### ***6. Return to Normal Operations***

A decision to reopen the site to all staff will be made by the Office of the Science Director only when the applicable county health authority has determined that the pandemic emergency is over. Consultation with the NOAA Western Regional Office, the Seattle Federal Executive Board, Fisheries and NOAA management and other organizations may be necessary prior to reopening a site.

## 8. *References and Important Links:*

### General:

NOAA Homeland Security Program Office:

<http://www.homelandsecurity.noaa.gov/influenza.html>

NOAA Safety and Environmental Compliance Office: <http://www.seco.noaa.gov/>

Centers for Disease Control: <http://www.cdc.gov/pandemic>

World Health Organization: <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/influenza/pandemic/en/>

Federal Occupational Health: <http://www.foh.dhhs.gov/>

Office of Personnel Management: <http://www.opm.gov/pandemic/>

GSA:

[http://www.gsa.gov/Portal/gsa/ep/contentView.do?contentType=GSA\\_OVERVIEW&contentId=22453&noc=T](http://www.gsa.gov/Portal/gsa/ep/contentView.do?contentType=GSA_OVERVIEW&contentId=22453&noc=T)

PandemicFlu.gov website:

<http://pandemicflu.gov/>

### Site-specific:

#### **Montlake Campus:**

Public Health: Seattle and King County:

<http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health.aspx>

King County Pandemic Plan: <http://www.metrokc.gov/health/pandemicflu/plan/>

University of Washington- Pandemic Information:

<http://www.washington.edu/emergency/index.php>

#### **Pasco Research Station:**

Benton County Health Department:

<http://www.co.benton.or.us/health/>

#### **Point Adams Research Station:**

Clatsop County Health and Human Services:

<http://www.co.clatsop.or.us/default.asp?deptid=10&pageid=15>

**Manchester Research Station:**

Kitsap County Health District and Public Health:

<http://www.kitsapcountyhealth.com/>

**Newport Research Station:**

Lincoln County Health and Human Services:

<http://www.lincolncountyhealth.com/>

Oregon State University:

<http://www.alert.oregonstate.edu/>

Oregon Federal Executive Board

[http://www.oregonfeb.us/ofeb\\_pages/ofeb\\_panflu.htm](http://www.oregonfeb.us/ofeb_pages/ofeb_panflu.htm)

**Mukilteo Research Station:**

Snohomish Health District:

<http://www.snohd.org/>