



**GUIDELINES FOR RETURNING TO WORK  
SETRPC OFFICES – COVID-19  
Effective May 4, 2020**

## INTRODUCTION

The South East Texas Regional Planning Commission Offices will remain closed to the public until further notice but will be open to a limited number of employees based on guidelines, as prescribed in the publication *Texans Helping Texans: The Governor's Report to Open Texas – April 27, 2020*.

Per the Governor's report: individuals, employers, employees and customers are encouraged to follow the MINIMUM health protocols recommended by the Department of State Health Services (DSHS), in addition to federal and state employment laws and workplace safety standards. The DSHS minimum recommended health protocols are subject to change based on new and evolving information. The SETRPC will be following these protocols. Due to the fluid nature of the response to COVID-19, protocols and policies detailed in this document are subject to change at any time based on new and evolving information. Changes will be sent to all employees when they occur.

### **Who Should Return to Work**

- Employees may return to work at the office under the following circumstances:
  - if there is work that needs to be completed on-site (please continue to only remain at the building as long as necessary); or
  - a Director or Immediate Supervisor requests an employee be at the office.
- **Anyone who can, should continue to telework and remain at home. This is particularly important for individuals who have medical issues (such as heart disease, diabetes, cancer or a weakened immune system, etc.) and/or those who are 65 years or older.**
- **If you or someone in your home is sick, stay at home and contact your Director immediately. The Director should then contact the Human Resources Manager immediately.**
- The maximum number of employees authorized to be in the offices of the SETRPC is twenty-five (25). A log of individuals who are in the building will be kept at the front reception area at all times. Once the maximum number is reached, no additional employees will be allowed to enter. Should extenuating circumstances arise, contact the Executive Director.

*In accordance with Governor Abbott's executive order GA-18, the following are minimum recommended health protocols for all businesses choosing to operate in Texas. Employers may adopt additional protocols consistent with their specific needs and circumstances to help protect the health and safety of all employees and customers. (The Governor's Report to Open Texas – April 27, 2020).*

*The virus that causes COVID-19 can spread to others by infected persons who have few or no symptoms. Even if the person is only mildly ill, the people they spread it to may become seriously ill or even die, especially if that person is 65 or older with pre-existing health conditions that place them at higher risk. Because of the hidden nature of this threat, everyone should rigorously follow the practices specified in these protocols, all of which facilitate a safe and measured reopening of Texas. The virus that causes COVID-19 is still circulating in our communities. We should continue to observe practices that protect everyone, including those who are most vulnerable. (The Governor's Report to Open Texas – April 27, 2020).*

## HEALTH PROTOCOLS FOR EMPLOYEES

### Entering the Office

- All employees who enter the building will do so on the reception side of the lobby. The door on the opposite side of the lobby will be locked and cannot be accessed via the lobby.
- Upon entering the reception area, all employees will clean their hands with hand sanitizer located on the wall to the right-hand side of the door or with hand sanitizer placed on the reception desk ledge.

### Screening

- All employees will be screened before entering the office further. Employees will be provided with a form listing signs/symptoms of possible COVID-19 (see Attachment A).
  - If the employee has any of the listed signs or symptoms of possible COVID-19 (listed below) that are new or worsening, they will check the symptom, sign the form and be sent home. If you feel that you have a condition listed that is a chronic condition, please exit the reception area, return to your vehicle and contact the Human Resources Manager to be vetted further.
    - Cough
    - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
    - Chills
    - Repeated shaking with chills
    - Muscle pain
    - Headache
    - Sore Throat
    - Loss of taste or smell
    - Diarrhea
    - Feeling feverish or measured temp greater than or equal to 100.0 degrees Fahrenheit
    - Known close contact with a person who is lab confirmed to have COVID-19
  - If non-symptomatic, the employee will check a box stating they have no symptoms and will sign the form.
- The temperature of each employee will be taken by a handheld thermometer by an individual working the front desk and recorded on the form. If a temperature reading is above 100.0 the employee will be sent home.
- This procedure will be performed each time the employee enters the office from outside of the building. All forms will be turned in to the Human Resources Office at the end of each day to be appropriately filed.

**NOTE: Due to the seriousness of COVID-19 no one should joke, play or tease about symptoms in the reception area where screening is taking place or anywhere else in the office. All comments/actions made with regard to symptoms will be taken seriously and handled as such.**

### **Social Distancing**

Employees should maintain at least 6 feet of separation from other individuals. If such distancing is not feasible, other measures such as face covering (over the nose and mouth), hand hygiene, cough etiquette, cleanliness and sanitation should be rigorously practiced.

### **Face Masks**

Employees are encouraged to wear face masks (over the nose and mouth), when appropriate or if this action makes the employee feel more comfortable. If available, employees should consider wearing non-medical grade face masks.

### **Return to Work if Employee Has Symptoms of COVID-19**

Employees with new or worsening signs or symptoms of COVID-19, as listed on the screening checklist will not be allowed to return to work until:

- In the case of an employee who was diagnosed with COVID-19, the individual may return to work when all three of the following criteria are met:
  - at least 3 days (72 hours) have passed *since recovery* (resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications); and
  - the individual has improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); and
  - at least 7 days have passed since *symptoms first* appeared; or
- In the case of an employee who has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and does not get evaluated by a medical professional or tested for COVID-19, the individual is assumed to have COVID-19, and the individual may not return to work until the individual has completed the same three-step criteria listed above; or
- If the employee has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and wants to return to work before completing the above self-isolation period, the individual must obtain a medical professional's note clearing the individual for return based on an alternative diagnosis.

### **Return to Work if Employee Has Close Contact with Lab-Confirmed COVID-19 Person**

Employees with known close contact to a person who is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19 will not be allowed to return to work until the end of the 14-day self-quarantine period from the last date of exposure. If an employee has been in close contact with someone who is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19 their Director should be notified immediately. Directors should then notify the Human Resources Manager immediately.

## HEALTH PROTOCOLS FOR OFFICE

- Regularly touched surfaces in public areas, such as doorknobs, tables, chairs and restrooms are regularly and frequently cleaned. Employees are asked to wipe down commonly touched surfaces in public areas such as copy machine display panels, microwave doors/buttons, coffee pot handles/buttons, water cooler spigots, etc. after use.
- Employees are asked to clean the doorknobs to their offices as well as their keyboards, phones, work surfaces, etc. on a regular basis.
- Hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, tissues, soap and water or similar disinfectant can be found throughout the SETRPC Offices. **DO NOT** remove or change the location of these items. If you find any of these items running low, or empty, contact the Human Resources Manager.
- Visible signage has been placed throughout the building to remind everyone of best hygiene practices and employees are asked to follow these practices.
- When entering the bathroom, use your hip or backside to push the door open to keep from touching the doors. Prior to exiting, ensure you wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and water. When leaving, open the doors holding a paper towel and deposit it in the wastebasket just inside the door to the main hallway.
- No more than a maximum of 2 individuals should be in the kitchens or copy rooms, if feasible. If more than 2 individuals are present, social distancing should be practiced.
- The use of other workers' phones, desks, offices or other work tools and equipment is discouraged.

## QUESTIONS

Questions or clarification regarding these guidelines should be directed to the Human Resources Manager or the Executive Director.

SETRPC COVID-19 SCREENING FORM

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Employee/GuestName:\_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Measured Temperature:\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I am currently experiencing the following new or worsening signs or symptoms of possible COVID-19 (Check all below that apply):

- \_\_\_\_\_ Cough
- \_\_\_\_\_ Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- \_\_\_\_\_ Chills
- \_\_\_\_\_ Repeated shaking with chills
- \_\_\_\_\_ Muscle pain
- \_\_\_\_\_ Headache
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sore Throat
- \_\_\_\_\_ Loss of taste or smell
- \_\_\_\_\_ Diarrhea
- \_\_\_\_\_ Feeling feverish or a measured temperature greater than or equal to 100.0 degrees Fahrenheit
- \_\_\_\_\_ Known close contact with a person who is lab confirmed to have COVID-19

\_\_\_\_\_ I am currently NOT experiencing any of the above listed new or worsening signs or symptoms of possible COVID-19.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee/Guest Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Screener Signature