**Ark-Tex Council of Governments**

**COVID-19 Returning to Work at the Office Phase I Policy**

**and Updated Driver Protocols**

The Ark-Tex Council of Governments (ATCOG) 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. ATCOG 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 at the Office:**

* Employees may only return to work at the office 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 an employee or someone in the employee’s home is sick with COVID-19 symptoms, the employee is to stay at home and contact the Supervisor immediately. The Supervisor should then contact the Human Resources Manager immediately.
* The maximum number of employees authorized to be in ATCOG’s main Texarkana office 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.
* The maximum number of employees authorized to be in any TRAX office is as follows: 3-4 people for the Texarkana and Paris offices and 2 people for the Mt. Pleasant and Sulphur Springs offices. Once the maximum number is reached, no additional employees will be allowed to enter. Follow additional instructions specific to each office for driver and office personnel separation. Should extenuating circumstances arise, contact the Supervisor.

*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**

* Upon entering, all employees will clean their hands with hand sanitizer placed at the designated screening area or wash their hands with soap and water at their personal sinks, then return to the designated screening area.
* All employees will self-screen immediately after sanitizing or cleaning their hands.

**Driver Compartments (TRAX staff only)**

* Thoroughly clean the driver compartments of the vehicle several times each day. Pay special attention to the frequently touched items, including, but not limited to:
	+ Steering wheel, door handles, gear shift, controls, radio, arm rests and adjacent areas
* Routinely clean the frequently touched passenger areas of the bus, including, but not limited to:
	+ Handrails, seats, arm rests, grab bars, area beside entry and exit doors where passengers often touch.
* Wear masks and gloves at all times when in close contact with or assisting passengers.
* Remove gloves and sanitize hands before entering the driver compartment.
* Sanitize hands before and after adjusting or removing facial coverings.
* Continuously keep fresh air entering the vehicle by opening the “fresh air vent” and leaving the air/ac on at all times

**Self-Screening**

**Temperature**

* The temperature of each employee reporting to an office or service vehicle will be recorded daily. If a temperature reading is greater than or equal to 100.4° F, the employee will be sent home.
* Touchless thermometers will be provided at each screening station, or oral thermometers will be issued to drivers who do not normally report to an office.
* For employees utilizing a screening station thermometer, you must wash or sanitize your hands before and after utilizing the thermometer.
* The employee will point the thermometer at the center of his or her forehead while holding the device one to two inches away. Hold the trigger until a beep is heard (1-2 seconds), then note the temp for recording purposes. If the temp is greater than 100.4, then leave the building immediately and notify your supervisor by phone.

**Checklist**

* An electronic checklist will be provided for employees, which will be accessible by a computer or tablet.
* If the employee has any of the signs or symptoms of possible COVID-19 (listed below) that are new or worsening, he or she will check the symptom, submit the form and be sent home. If you feel that you have a condition listed that is a chronic condition, please exit the screening area, return to your vehicle and contact the Human Resources Manager to be vetted further.

- Cough - Loss of taste or smell

- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing - Diarrhea

- Chills - Feeling feverish or measured temp

- Repeated shaking with chills greater than or equal to 100.4 F

- Muscle pain - Headache

- Sore Throat

- 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 submit the form.

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 regarding 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.

Employees should not enter other offices. Phone calls, TEAMS and email should be used for communication even between offices.

**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 at the Office If Employee Has Symptoms of COVID-19:**

This section supersedes the conditions stated in the ‘Working from Home While Sick (Non-COVID-19)’ section of the ATCOG Continuity Plan and Policy Relating to COVID-19, which went into effective April 1, 2020.

Per CDC recommendations, 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 at the office until:

* In the case of an employee who was diagnosed with COVID-19, the individual may return to work at the office 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.

• 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 at the office 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 at the office before completing the above self-isolation period, the individual must obtain a negative test for COVID-19 and other communicable diseases (flu, strep, etc… if applicable).

**Return to Work at the Office if a Household Member Has COVID-19 Symptoms:**

The employee will not be permitted at the office until after the household member has met the above mentioned 3-step criteria and the employee is symptom-free and obtains a negative COVID-19 test result.

**Health Protocols for the 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 ATCOG 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.
* No more than a maximum of 2 individuals should be in the kitchen or 1 in the copy/mail rooms.
* The use of other employees’ phones, desks, offices or other work tools and equipment is discouraged.
* Air circulation with building HVAC, even in fan only mode, is strongly encouraged. Personal fans may also be used in offices.

**Questions:**

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

CDC information for Bus Operator Guidance can be found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/bus-transit-operator.html>