



# **NewFields Health, Safety and Environment Best Practice**

## **BP 4 – Field Work and Infectious Disease**



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## BP 4 – Field Work and Infectious Disease

The safety and well-being of NewFields staff and others working in the field during the COVID-19 virus pandemic is of paramount importance to NewFields. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has prepared Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19. In general, OSHA focuses on the need for employers to implement engineering, administrative and work practice controls and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). In addition, OSHA's General Duty Clause, Section 5 (a)(1), requires employers to provide their employees with a workplace free from recognized hazards likely to cause death or serious physical harm. Site specific Health and Safety Plans (HASPs) prepared for projects or field work generally address potential physical, chemical and biological hazards. Biological hazards such as infectious diseases are not typically considered in a site-specific HASP. Consequently, NewFields has adopted this Best Practice (BP) guidance for field work conducted in geographic areas with the potential for the presence of infectious diseases, specifically COVID-19.

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory disease caused by the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2). First discovered in China, it has spread to most countries around the world including the United States. Infection with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, can cause illness ranging from mild to severe and, in some cases, can be fatal. Symptoms typically include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Some people infected with the virus have reported experiencing other non-respiratory symptoms. Other people, referred to as “asymptomatic cases”, have experienced no symptoms at all. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), symptoms of COVID-19 may appear in as few as two days or as long as 14 days after exposure.

Although the first human case of COVID-19 likely resulted from exposure to infected animals, infected people can spread SARS-CoV-2 to other people. The virus is thought to spread mainly from person to person transmission, including:

- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet), and
- Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.

It may be possible that a person can contract COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has SARS-CoV-2 on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, although this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

According to a recent study,<sup>1</sup> the length of time SARS-CoV-2 virus remains on various surfaces depends on the surface. According to the study:

- **On plastic:** After eight hours only 10 percent of the virus was still there, but it didn't become undetectable until after 72 hours.
- **On stainless steel:** The numbers began plummeting after just four hours, becoming undetectable by about 48 hours.
- **On copper:** Undetectable by 8 hours.
- **On cardboard:** Undetectable by 48 hours.

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<sup>1</sup> Aerosol and Surface Stability of SARS-CoV-2 as Compared with SARS-CoV-1, The New England Journal of Medicine. Available on-line at [https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMc2004973?query=featured\\_home](https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMc2004973?query=featured_home)

## **Mitigations to the Risk of Exposure**

NewFields staff performing field work will take the following precautions to protect their health, the health of coworkers, our clients and their staff, as well as the community at large:

- Do not perform field work or report to a work site if you are not authorized to travel to or work in a location with a Shelter-in-Place or Stay-in-Place Order (below).
- Do not report to work or a job site if you are sick or exhibiting the symptoms of COVID-19, including fever, cough or shortness of breath.
- Do not report to work or a job site
  - if you have been confirmed or diagnosed as possibly having COVID-19 by a healthcare provider;
  - for 5 days if you have come into close contact<sup>2</sup> with an individual who has COVID, and (i) it has been longer than 6 months since you completed the Moderna or Pfizer vaccine regimen or longer than 2 months since you completed the Johnson & Johnson vaccine regimen, and (2) you have not received a booster dose.<sup>3</sup> You should test after day 5 if possible and wear a mask for an additional 5 days. If you develop symptoms during this time, take a test and stay home.
- You must inform NewFields Human Resources Department if you were in close contact with any NewFields employees, contractors, or business partners, or were present at a NewFields client site, in the 2 days prior to the date that you first exhibited symptoms or the 2 days prior to your first COVID positive test, if you exhibit no symptoms.
- Wash hands thoroughly and frequently with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer with 60-70 percent alcohol.
- Avoid touching your face, eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash, and wash your hands immediately after.
- Avoid contact with people who appear sick or ill.
- Utilize social distancing work practices whenever possible. This includes maintaining a distance of 6 feet or more between site workers.

Individual States and municipalities may have also adopted local requirements in addition to the recommendations put forward by the CDC. For example, additional requirements on a job site may include COVID-19 specific warning or work practice signage all workers and visitors must comply with. These may include social distancing requirements, the use of masks. Local regulations may also require the use of gloves and other local area or site-specific performance requirements.

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<sup>2</sup> Close contact means any of the following: (1) contact within 6 feet for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period starting from two days prior to illness onset (or two days prior to test specimen collection for asymptomatic patients) until the time the patient is isolated; (2) having direct contact with infectious secretions such as being coughed or sneezed on; (3) providing care at home to someone who is sick with COVID; (4) having direct physical contact with a person who has COVID (i.e. hugging or kissing); or (5) sharing eating or drinking utensils with someone who has COVID.

<sup>3</sup> Individuals who completed both doses of the Moderna or Pfizer vaccines within the past 6 months, completed the Johnson & Johnson vaccine within the past 2 months, or who have received a booster dose of any of these vaccines need not quarantine after exposure, but should wear a mask for 10 days and test on day 5 if possible.

## Workplace Cleaning and Disinfecting

NewFields staff performing field work will establish regular cleaning cycle of the work area and work place tools or equipment based on frequency of use and work area staffing levels. Disposable gloves will be worn by those cleaning the workplace. Cleaning with soap and water reduces the number of germs, dirt and impurities on the surface. Disinfecting surfaces after cleaning kills germs on surfaces.

In addition, CDC also recommends disinfecting frequently touched surfaces by using a [EPA-registered household disinfectant](#). Follow the instructions on the product label to ensure safe and effective use of the product. Many products recommend keeping the surface wet for a period of time (see product label). Precautions such as wearing gloves and making sure there is good ventilation during product use. See NewFields HSE SOP 13 Hazard Communication for additional guidance on product use and storage.

OSHA requires employers to provide a workplace which is free from recognized hazards that are causing or likely to cause death or serious harm. The CDC also advises that steps be taken to mitigate possible spread of COVID when a COVID positive or presumed positive Team Member has been present at a NewFields office. These steps can range from a targeted deep cleaning to full office closure. It is difficult to set a rule regarding when deep cleaning or office closure is required, given the different levels of possible contamination. Office administrators should use best judgment in making these decisions, and should follow CDC guidance that can be found here: [Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility](#) (see chart on “Cleaning and disinfecting your building or facility if someone is sick.”)

In summary, steps that should be taken to mitigate transmission of COVID if a COVID positive or presumed positive individual has been present at the office within seven (7) days<sup>4</sup> should include one or more of the following:

- Close off areas (i.e. personal offices) used by the person who was sick.
- Open doors and windows for increased ventilation, if possible.
- Wait 24 hours to clean or disinfect; then, clean and disinfect all areas used by the person who was sick, such as bathrooms common areas, shared electronics and equipment, etc. Wear gloves while cleaning and follow manufacturers recommendations on the proper use, compatibility and storage of cleaning products. EPA-registered disinfectants can be found here: [Disinfectants for use against SARS-CoV-2](#).
- If vacuuming, use a vacuum with a HEPA filter, and do not vacuum while other people are present in the room.
- Temporarily turn off in-room, window or wall-mounted air conditioning or fans; do not deactivate central HVAC systems as they have filtration capabilities.

## Shelter-in-Place / Stay-in-Place Orders

NewFields staff who intend to perform field work in a geographic location with an established Shelter-in-Place or Stay-in-Place Order must ensure they will be performing “Essential Work” activities and are authorized to mobilize and perform site work activities. A letter stating this authorization must accompany the employee during travel to and from the work site. A letter of authorization may be obtained from the worksite owner or their management team. An authorizing letter may also be obtained

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<sup>4</sup> Current CDC guidance is that if more than 7 days have passed since the sick person visited or used the facility, additional cleaning and disinfection is not necessary.

by contacting NewFields Legal Department, B.B. Carlson or Jennifer Rosenberg.

## Use of Face Masks

The CDC continues to study the spread and effects of the novel coronavirus across the United States. Studies indicate that a significant portion of individuals with coronavirus lack symptoms (“asymptomatic”) and that even those who eventually develop symptoms (“pre-symptomatic”) can transmit the virus to others before showing symptoms. This means that the virus can spread between people interacting in close proximity—for example, speaking, coughing, or sneezing—even if those people are not exhibiting symptoms. In light of this new evidence, the CDC now recommends wearing face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain (e.g., grocery stores and pharmacies), **especially** in areas of significant community-based transmission. The CDC continues to maintain, however, that it is still critical to practice 6-foot social distancing to slow the spread of the virus.

Current CDC guidance regarding use of face coverings to prevent the spread of COVID -19 can be found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>. In sum, the CDC now recommends that individuals choose N-95 or KN95 masks over cloth masks, although “surgical N95s” are a specific type of respirator that should be reserved for healthcare settings. The use of N-95 or KN-95 respirators by any NewFields employee for this purpose is considered “Voluntary Use” and users must review and understand SOP 21 Respiratory Protection prior to using or wearing a respirator. Accordingly, NewFields staff and contractors who intend to perform field work are expected to abide by the CDC guidelines and wear face masks where required by state or local law or by our clients<sup>3</sup>. In addition, all project managers must ensure that this requirement is shared with all independent contractors and subcontractors.<sup>5</sup>

For this purpose, NewFields recommends the following when considering the use of face masks:

- Select a face mask type and size that will fit your face properly and cover both your nose and mouth while allowing you to breathe comfortably. The mask should not restrict breathing in any way.
- The mask must *at a minimum* meet CDC Guidelines found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>.
- Wash your hands thoroughly before handling the face mask or touching your face.
- Be sure to secure the mask to your face properly.
- Avoid loose fitting masks or materials, if possible, as this may lead to the mask or covering slipping down your face.
- Resist the temptation to bring your hands to your face to adjust or reposition the mask or covering as this may bring your unwashed hands in contact with your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Wash your hands thoroughly before removing your mask.
- Wash and dry reusable masks frequently.
- Do not share your face mask with coworkers or others.
- Store the mask in a clean environment such as a resealable bag or baggie.
- Do not reuse the mask if it has become damaged, is wet or if breathing becomes difficult.

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<sup>5</sup> “Public settings” include all places where you encounter others (even when those encounters occur outside).

- If you are provided a face mask by NewFields, you may choose to wear the one provided or one of your own choosing as long as it meets the guidelines listed above.

## Temperature Checks

In an effort to proactively identify potential illness, prevent potential exposure to others and as required by some work locations, NewFields fieldwork staff and contractors must periodically conduct self-administered temperature checks. In addition, temperature checks may also be performed by client representatives prior to entry to a work site and periodically throughout the work shift. NewFields staff and contractors must follow these protocols with respect to temperature checks:

- On workdays, you must self-administer temperature checks before work each day and also at a minimum two to four times per shift.
- All temperature screenings may be performed using a non-invasive temperature scanning device or a standard thermometer. If a standard thermometer is to be used, it will be thoroughly disinfected with a solution containing at least 60-70 percent alcohol.
- If your reading is within the normal range (<100.4 F) and you are not experiencing symptoms of illness, continue as previously planned.
- If your temperature reading is high (>100.4 F), document the reading using the form at the end of this document and do not report to work or a field site. Remain or return home and contact your personal care physician by phone for guidance and instruction. Also inform your supervisor that you will not be reporting to work and contact the Human Resources Department. Your medical condition will remain confidential information.
- Use the form at the end of this document to log your temperature checks if the client whose project you are working on requires keeping such a log. If the client has another form that the client prefers, use that form.

## If You Become Sick or Ill

If you become sick or exhibit any symptoms of COVID-19, do not report to an office or field work site. If you have travelled to a remote work site or location for work, return to your hotel or accommodation and contact your personal care physician or local medical center for advice and guidance. This guidance may include advice on resting and recovering in your hotel or accommodation or advice for travel to return to your home location.

In addition, contact the Human Resources Department if you have (i) been confirmed or diagnosed as possibly having COVID-19 by a healthcare provider or (ii) have come into close contact with such an individual in the last 14 days<sup>6</sup> **and** you were in close contact with any NewFields employees, contractors, or business partners, or were present at a NewFields client site in the 2 days prior to the date that you first exhibited symptoms or two days prior to the date on which you took your first COVID-positive test if you are asymptomatic.

## Mitigations to Business Continuity

NewFields Partners and Project Managers should also consider alternative project staffing arrangements in the event project programmed staff become sick, ill or are required to self-isolate preventing work on a job site or an office location. These situations may occur as a result of the following:

- Employees need to self-isolate following travel (if required by applicable law) or if staff are

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<sup>6</sup> Fully vaccinated employees do not need to notify HR if they have been in close contact with a COVID positive or presumed positive individual unless they experience symptoms of COVID.

notified of potential close contact with other individuals presumed or tested positive for COVID-19.

- Self-isolation resulting from contact with members of their household who are presumed or have tested positive for COVID-19.
- Self-isolation resulting from close contact with coworkers who are presumed or have tested positive for COVID-19.

## Travel Concerns

Provided that you are not ill, subject to involuntary isolation for another reason, or have requested and been approved not to travel by HR<sup>7</sup>, staff whose job includes fieldwork or visiting client sites, will continue to be expected to perform those functions of their job. If you are ever concerned, however, that COVID-19 safety protocols (or any other safety protocols) are not being followed at a worksite, please contact your supervisor, Richard Leferink, or HR immediately.

Even where safety protocols are being followed, NewFields understands that travel during the pandemic can cause concern. If, despite taking the precautions required by this policy<sup>8</sup> you are concerned about the risks of travel presented to your own health and safety or that of your family or household members (when you return home), we encourage you to discuss those concerns with your supervisor. Supervisors are encouraged, where possible, to schedule assignments in ways that allow staff to have breaks between travel such that the staff member will have some time to assess whether s/he is experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms before his/her next trip. If you have concerns that you feel are not adequately resolved after you have worked with your supervisor, please contact HR.

If you are concerned about returning home to vulnerable family members or household members after an assignment involving travel, you may choose to self-isolate for 14 days during which time you may have the opportunity to assess whether you are experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms. If you cannot work from home during this time or if voluntary self-isolation prevents you from performing the fieldwork to which you are assigned<sup>9</sup>, you may use any paid leave available<sup>10</sup> to you or you may take unpaid leave.

If at any time you experience COVID-19 symptoms, follow the instructions in this policy. If you wish to be tested, either because you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 or believe you have been exposed to COVID-19, the cost of your test should be covered by your health plan. The U.S. government has arranged for each household to receive up to 4 free at-home COVID tests, which can be ordered <https://special.usps.com/testkits>. In addition, members of NewFields Companies Health Benefits Plan may be eligible to receive a self-performed COVID test kit at no cost; see NewFields COVID Testing Policy for more information about these test kits.

Please note that self-isolation after travel is not required by NewFields policy. However, if state law or client site rules require self-isolation, you will be expected to comply.

Please research all rules and regulations related to testing requirements before you make any travel plans. Countries, states and/or airlines may restrict travel to those who are able to show evidence of a

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<sup>7</sup> See below.

<sup>8</sup> Also note further precautions discussed on the CDC website regarding travel: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/travel-in-the-us.html>. You can also contact Richard Leferink or HR for assistance in travel planning. They can help research, for example, which airlines are keeping middle seats unoccupied.

<sup>9</sup> You may still be assigned to fieldwork during voluntary self-isolation. Voluntary self-isolation is isolation that occurs when an employee is not required by applicable law, NewFields policy, or a client requirement to isolate, but the employee chooses to isolate anyway for some other reason.

<sup>10</sup> Contractors and subcontractors are not eligible for any NewFields benefits, including paid leave or reimbursement for hotel stays or COVID tests, as referenced in this section.

negative COVID test result within a certain time period. You may wish to schedule testing in advance, both prior to your departure and prior to your return. Particularly note that Effective December 17, 2021, the CDC had implemented a rule requiring all travelers entering the U.S. via air to show evidence of a negative COVID test result from a test taken no more than one day prior to departure before boarding the flight<sup>11</sup>. This applies to U.S. and non-U.S. citizens. We encourage you to locate an appropriate testing facility at your destination (and make an appointment if possible) before leaving the U.S. in order to minimize any risk of being finding yourself unable to return home.

## Requesting Not to Travel

NewFields understands that some people who have underlying conditions may have concerns about travelling for work. While the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires companies to provide reasonable accommodation to anyone whose disability affects their ability to perform their job, many people who are considered to be a part of the “vulnerable population” by the CDC with respect to COVID-19 would not be considered “disabled” under the ADA. However, even though the ADA may not require NewFields to provide accommodation to those who fall within the CDC definition of “vulnerable population”, NewFields would like to discuss your concerns with you in order to determine if there is a way to alleviate those concerns- such as perhaps allowing you not to travel or limiting your travel during this pandemic.

The CDC defines the COVID-19 “vulnerable population” as:

- adults age 65 or older
- people who have underlying medical conditions including:
  - chronic lung disease,
  - cancer
  - moderate to severe asthma,
  - heart conditions,
  - diabetes (type 1 or type 2),
  - chronic kidney disease,
  - severe obesity, and
  - chronic liver disease,
  - dementia or other neurological conditions
  - Down syndrome
  - HIV infection
  - Mental health conditions, including depression or schizophrenia spectrum disorders

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<sup>11</sup> Individuals who recently recovered from COVID-19 may instead travel with documentation of such recovery in lieu of a negative COVID test result. Such travelers will be required to show a positive COVID-19 viral test result on a sample taken no more than 90 days before the flight’s departure from a foreign country **and** a letter from a licensed healthcare provider or public health official stating that the individual was cleared to travel.



- Sickle cell disease or thalassemia
- Current or former smokers
- Stroke or cerebrovascular disease
- Substance use disorder
- Tuberculosis
- Solid organ or blood stem cell transplant recipients
- individuals who otherwise are immunocompromised
- Individuals who are pregnant or have been pregnant in the past 42 days

If you fall within one of these categories, it is your responsibility to voice your concerns to HR. We want to take proactive steps to continue to protect your health but cannot do so without employee cooperation. If you fall within the definition of “vulnerable population” and reach out to HR, NewFields will consider your request without asking for extensive details regarding your personal health situation, although we may ask for some verification of the underlying condition. **If you do not reach out to HR, NewFields will assume you do not have concerns about travelling for work.**

