NCE Safety Protocols for COVID-19 – Fieldwork

June 9, 2020

NCE’s highest priority is the health and safety of our employees and our communities. This document provides guidance for NCE fieldworkers during the COVID-19 pandemic. These protocols follow guidance issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). The attached COVID-19 Information sheet summarizes the current understanding of virus symptoms and recommendations for preventing transmission.

Because NCE’s fieldwork can range from one person working primarily from a vehicle to larger teams working on an active construction site, these guidelines have been developed to provide flexibility. All employees must also follow client-required project- and/or site-specific safety procedures, where applicable.

At a minimum, NCE fieldworkers must observe and implement the protocols listed below. As mentioned above, any more stringent client- or site-specific procedures take precedence.

1. Before leaving home (or hotel if traveling), assess your health and the nature of the fieldwork. A sample decision tree is provided below.
2. NCE will supply face masks, disposable gloves, hand sanitizer, alcohol-based cleansing wipes, necessary equipment-specific disinfectants, pens, writing pads or notebooks, drinking water, and closeable trash bags upon request. Each fieldworker is responsible for ensuring they have a sufficient number of these items for each field day.
3. Carry a face mask at all times; masks must be worn **any time** you are within 6 feet of another person. If the face masks hinder necessary communication during fieldwork, you may substitute masks with face shields or similar; communicating from 6-feet apart is preferred.
4. Do not share cell phones, pens, food, or beverages. Whenever possible, one person should operate each piece of equipment. Gloves are encouraged but not required for activities that do not require cross-contact. If equipment must be shared (e.g., laptop, GPS unit, camera), wear gloves during the entire time of usage. Bare hands may touch equipment **only** if gloves prevent proper operation of the equipment. Wipe down equipment before it is transferred from one person to another, even if both are wearing gloves.
5. Clean hands frequently, either by washing hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water or thoroughly rubbing in an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. After you remove mask to eat, drink, etc., be sure to sanitize before putting the mask back on.
6. Entering another person’s private vehicle is **prohibited**. If you are using a company or shared vehicle, put on a face mask and gloves and wipe down all common surfaces of the vehicle and equipment that may be used that day, including outside door handles; surfaces inside the passenger cabin; and outside car features that may be accessed such as gas cap and tire valve stem covers. Additional information on disinfecting vehicles can be found at [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/ organizations/disinfecting-transport-vehicles.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/%20organizations/disinfecting-transport-vehicles.html). All passengers must wear masks in the vehicle cabin. Wipe down surfaces if passengers change position.
7. To the extent practical, wear freshly washed clothes each day of fieldwork. Non-washable items (e.g., boots, hardhats, belts) should be cleaned with alcohol-based disposable wipes.
8. At the end of the workday, sanitize common surfaces of shared vehicles and equipment.
9. If you stop by the office at any time, you must also follow the procedures distributed via email by Lorrie Cook on June 9, 2020, and any subsequently issued requirements before entering the office.

Attachments:

COVID-19 Information Sheet

COVID-19 Information Sheet

COVID-19 is a novel form of coronavirus that was first identified in 2019 and has rapidly spread worldwide. Because the virus can be transmitted by infected individuals before they show symptoms, NCE adheres to measures recommended by national, state, and local health authorities to reduce exposure to and spread of COVID-19. The general information provided here is summarized from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website.

Current best practices include limiting close contact with other people, wearing protective face masks, and washing hands thoroughly and frequently. These actions protect us, our families, our friends, our co-workers, and our communities.

How is the virus spread?

Experts believe the virus is primarily spread through contact with droplets from an infected person who sneezes, coughs, or talks close to another person, generally within 6 feet. There is also concern that people can contract the virus by touching a surface contaminated by the virus and then touching their mouth, nose, or eyes.

What are the symptoms?

Most infected individuals will show no or mild symptoms, but the infection can cause severe illness or death, especially in older adults and people with underlying medical conditions.

Typical symptoms include:

* Fever or chills
* Cough
* Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
* Fatigue
* Muscle or body aches
* Headache
* New loss of taste or smell
* Sore throat
* Congestion or runny nose
* Nausea or vomiting
* Diarrhea

**Seek immediate emergency medical care** for:

* Trouble breathing
* Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
* New confusion
* Inability to wake or stay awake
* Bluish lips or face

How should I protect myself and others?

**Sanitize frequently**: Wash your hands vigorously with soap and water for a full 20 seconds. If soap and running water are not available, use hand sanitizers or wipes with at least 70 percent alcohol.

**Practice social distancing**: Do not gather in groups or crowded places. Remain 6 feet away from others except those in your household.

**Wear a face mask**: If you must be outside your home, carry a face mask at all times; masks may be commercially made or consist of fabric such as a bandana securely tied to cover nose and mouth. Wear the face mask any time you are within 6 feet of another person. Move at least 6 feet away from others to remove the mask and/or consume food or beverages. Sanitize your hands before putting the mask back on.

**Limit travel**: Outbreaks of COVID-19 are ongoing throughout the world; it is safest to remain local if at all possible.

What should I do…

If I have symptoms?

* **Self-quarantine** to protect others, to the extent possible.
* Call your doctor. Note that most people with coronavirus have mild symptoms.
* Call your supervisor.

If I think I have been exposed but have no symptoms?

* Call your supervisor for guidance.

If I am medically diagnosed with COVID-19?

* Call your supervisor immediately.
* Be prepared to provide the names of all your contacts within the previous 14 days so those people can be informed that they may have been exposed to COVID-19.

When can I return to work?

Your doctor and your supervisor will work with you to determine when you can return to work, depending on the current guidance at the time you show symptoms.

Where can I find additional information?

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/>)

Occupational Safety and Health Administration

(<https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/>)

Health department for your state, county, and city