

# EPA Phase 3 Guidance

## Phase 3 Guidance

This document provides additional guidance to National Program Managers (NPMs) and Regions for updating plans to return to the office in a safe and thoughtful manner consistent with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations for social distancing and with continued flexibilities for vulnerable populations and employees with dependent care responsibilities. Plans need to be updated by each organization prior to entering Phase 3.

As we continue to plan for Phase 3, it is important to keep the gating criteria for Phase 3 in mind. We will continue to monitor and adjust where necessary.

## OFFICE RETURN/SOCIAL DISTANCING

EPA will follow the CDC recommendation for Social Distancing. For a period of time while transitioning we will utilize regular and situational telework (see Telework section below) to provide social distancing for those employees working in a cubicle or in an enclosed shared office. Staff working in enclosed private offices will return to their previous regular telework schedule. Social distancing plans will be reviewed every eight weeks or when CDC requirements change.

Each National Program and Region will develop a social distancing plan for employees working in cubicles, shared offices, and common spaces in each of their locations. The Office of Mission Support will provide a plan for common spaces in the National Capital Region. Every employee, including those working in private offices, will be placed in a daily cohort group. This will allow each location to develop social distancing plans around employee schedules.

Each NPM/Region will evaluate its floor plans and designate cohorts of employees to follow a daily schedule that provides for social distancing.

NPMS/Regions should review and include social distancing plans for common spaces such as conference rooms.

While it is critical to have a structured schedule for our workforce to ensure their safety and well-being while working in an office environment, for personnel working in the research, program and regional laboratories, supervisors should work closely with those staff to tailor their individual work schedules based on the nature of their work. For example, conducting

experiments, analyses and research may have many different timeframes, as well as requirements for access to equipment and other resources that may not be conducive to structured, intermittent schedules.

## **FLEXIBILITIES**

### Dependent Care

For those with dependent care issues, expanded situational telework will remain available, along with the extended workday hours of 5:00 am to 11:30 pm and voluntary Saturday hours. Employees should complete the dependent care form and provide it to their supervisor. Flexibilities should be appropriate to the specific dependent care situation. Employees and supervisors will review these flexibilities every eight weeks.

### Vulnerable Populations

Employees in this category or who have a member of the vulnerable population in their household should work with their supervisors to identify appropriate workplace flexibilities needed, such as expanded situational telework or use of videoconferencing while in the office. These employees should return to their normal work hours while teleworking and may utilize the extended workplace hours if on a flexible schedule during any office days as described below. Employees may self-certify as to being in the vulnerable population or having someone in their household in the vulnerable population. Employees and supervisors will review these flexibilities every eight weeks.

### **Identification of Flexibilities**

Each NPM/Region must request employees self-identify if they are in any of the following groups:

- Employees with dependent care issues.
- Employees in a vulnerable population or with a household member who is part of a vulnerable population and seeking flexibility.

Supervisors will then work with each employee on the specific flexibility needed.

## **ENTERING PHASE 3**

Phase 3 will begin with a two-week transition period. During this transition time, employees who will be coming into the office regularly in Phase 3 are required to return to the workplace at least one day each week based on their cohort schedule. This requirement allows for an early opportunity to test social distancing plans, gather feedback and modify facility plans (e.g., elevator capacity), and allows employees to evaluate mass transit options (if applicable).

Once the two-week transition period has concluded, employees are expected to return to the office in accordance with their locations' social distancing plan. Exceptions would include employees leveraging dependent care or vulnerable population flexibilities, regular telework days, situational telework days, compressed workdays or when leave is used.

### **Telework**

All employees in cubicles or shared offices will be eligible for a minimum of five days of telework per pay period during the first eight weeks of Phase 3 in conjunction with the social distancing plan. These five days will be a combination of regular telework and situational telework as available under the Agency Telework Policy or as outlined in each collective bargaining agreement, whichever is greater. Employees may work with their supervisors to adjust their telework schedule as needed while maintaining the office's social distancing plan. This flexibility will be reviewed prior to the expiration of the eight weeks.

### **Work Schedules**

For those on a flexible work schedule, extended workday hours of 5:30 am to 9:00 pm will be available for the days an employee is in the office. This would create a greater range of arrival and departure times to assist with elevator capacity concerns and commuting outside the normal rush hour. For those exercising dependent care flexibilities, extended workday hours of 5:00 am to 11:30 pm and voluntary Saturday hours will remain in place (though hours worked in the office would be limited to 5:30 am to 9:00 pm weekdays).

### **Mass Transit**

If mass transit operation is deemed to impact returning to the office, workforce flexibilities such as expanded use of telework or continuing in-office work schedule flexibilities will be considered to mitigate the impact. This will be a facility-specific decision with concurrence by the Acting Deputy Administrator.

### **Service and Support Staff**

Service and support staff who are in regular physical proximity to their customers will receive additional social distancing support. Personnel requiring assistance are required to wear face coverings when interacting in person and to maintain the six feet social distancing protocol when practical. Social distancing signage will be posted by service and support staff workstations. Plans developed by the NPMs/Regions will include the specific support to be provided.

### **Face Coverings**

EPA will follow local requirements for the use of cloth face coverings. Generally, employees are expected to have their own masks for transit to and from the building and within the building space consistent with local requirements. Each EPA location will have a small number of face

coverings available should the employee arrive at work without one or should they not have a mask and require support services where social distancing is not feasible.