

**National Science Foundation
COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan
February 21, 2021**

The National Science Foundation, along with the rest of the Federal Government, is committed to addressing essential work requirements consistent with best public health practices. The agency's and Administration's paramount concern is the health and safety of Federal employees, on-site contractors, and individuals interacting with the Federal workforce. As set forth in the January 20, 2021 [Executive Order on Protecting the Federal Workforce and Requiring Mask-Wearing](#) the policy of the Administration is "to halt the spread of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) by relying on the best available data and science-based public health measures," including taking a science-based and data-driven approach to safety in Federal workplaces.

In accordance with "Protecting the Federal Workforce and Requiring Mask-Wearing," NSF has developed this plan to delineate the safety measures it will follow to ensure the health and safety of its employees, contractors, and visitors to the greatest extent possible. The plan includes measures to protect health, such as encouraging telework for all employees; requiring the use of face masks; limiting work-related travel; conducting contact tracing; and requiring symptom monitoring, isolation, and quarantining in accordance with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance. The plan identifies the team responsible for monitoring and evaluating health and safety measures and recommending changes as needed. The plan also includes measures aimed at promoting the safety of those working in and visiting the NSF building, including occupancy limits, physical distancing requirements, and guidance on hygiene and disinfecting shared equipment.

The guidance in this plan is reflected in the Workplace Safety: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) posted on InsideNSF. The FAQs will be updated whenever the guidance in this plan changes, and staff will be notified through the Weekly Wire and other means, as appropriate.

Goal

The health and safety of the NSF workforce and visitors is NSF's highest priority. NSF leadership, in partnership with AFGE Local 3403, has worked to provide additional flexibilities for staff under NSF's existing telework policy in light of local, state, and Federal policies about social distancing. In addition, NSF has established safety measures aligned to the latest guidance from the CDC and established public health best practices, based on evolving understanding of the pandemic. NSF will regularly monitor and reassess these measures to ensure the health and safety of its workforce and visitors to the greatest extent possible.

Health and Safety

Telework and Remote Work

All employees are encouraged to telework to the greatest extent possible. Employees will be given at least 30 days' notice before being required to report to work in the building, and guidance on maintaining safety while returning to on-site work will be provided.

Currently, employees may work in the building on a voluntary basis. Employees who plan to work inside the building are required to coordinate entry with their immediate supervisor or

Directorate/Office point of contact to ensure physical distancing can be maintained. The allowable maximum daily occupancy of the building is 25% and the number of employees, contractors and visitors who enter the building is tracked on a daily basis using PIV card data and visitor logs. Based on the workforce survey results, this upper limit will provide flexibility for Directorates and Offices to plan for staff who want to work inside the building as well as accommodate ad hoc visits to the building. It will also allow the COVID-19 Coordination Team to evaluate and monitor current safety measures as described in the COVID-19 Coordination Team section below. Should the occupancy limit be reached, personnel will be notified and asked to refrain from coming to the building for the remainder of the day except for mission-critical reasons, and additional individuals will be allowed to enter the building only as on-site individuals leave. Should the limit be reached on a regular basis, Directorates and Offices will be asked to develop staggered work schedules to enable building occupancy to remain under 25%. Additional information on occupancy limit procedures is included in the Occupancy section below. NSF will consider the level of community transmission indicated in CDC's [COVID Data Tracker County View](#) when considering whether to increase the allowable maximum daily occupancy, in consultation with the Safer Federal Workforce Task Force.

COVID-19 Coordination Team

NSF's former Return to On-site Facilities Working Group will serve as the agency's COVID-19 Coordination Team. The working group members include:

- Dale Bell, Division Director, Division of Institution and Award Support
- Linda Blevins, Deputy Assistant Director, Directorate for Engineering
- Patrick Breen, Division Director, Division of Acquisition and Cooperative Support
- Janis Coughlin-Piester, Deputy Office Head, Office of Budget, Finance and Award Management
- Peggy Gartner, Deputy Office Head, Office of Information and Resource Management (chair)
- Teresa Guillot, Deputy Division Director, Division of Information Systems
- Sam Howerton, Deputy Office Head, Office of International Science and Engineering
- Jennifer Munz, Equal Employment Opportunity Specialist/Senior Advisor, Office of Diversity and Inclusion
- Deanne Sobczak, Assistant General Counsel, Office of the General Counsel
- Nathan Wells, Deputy Division Director, Division of Human Resource Management
- Maren Williams, Division Director, Division of Administrative Services

John R. Moore, Industrial Hygienist, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, is the public health advisor to the group.

The COVID-19 Coordination Team currently meets on a biweekly basis, or more frequently as needed, to review compliance with agency COVID-19 workplace safety plans and protocols and consider potential revisions to agency COVID-19 workplace safety plans and protocols, and any other operational needs. The group will consult with the Safer Federal Workforce Task Force, as needed.

The COVID-19 Coordination Team Sub-Group provides research, justification, information, plans, and options for developing and proposes COVID-19 workplace safety plans and protocols to the COVID-19 Coordination Team. COVID-19 Coordination Team Sub-Group members include:

- Keith Boyea, Deputy Division Director, Division of Acquisition and Cooperative Support
- Barry Carlisle, Safety and Occupational Health Manager
- Jennifer Carter, Human Resource Specialist, Pay and Benefits Branch
- Gabe Gonzalez, Branch Chief, Workforce Relations Branch
- Teresa Guillot, Deputy Division Director, Division of Information Systems
- Hilary Haight, Acting Deputy Division Director, Division of Administrative Services
- John Lynskey, Deputy Division Director, Division of Financial Management
- Gwen Owens, Directorate Liaison Group Member
- Laurie Pena-Ariet, Head, Facilities Management Section
- Karen Skelton, Communications Officer, Office of Information and Resource Management
- Tony Teolis, Directorate Liaison Group Member
- Dave Verardo, President, Local 3403, American Federation of Government Employees
- Maren Williams, Division Director, Division of Administrative Services (chair)
- Mark Wilson, Branch Chief, Facilities and Operations Branch
- Alex Wynnyk, Deputy Division Director, Division of Institution and Award Support

The COVID-19 Coordination Team provides recommendations to Wonzie Gardner, Head of the Office of Information and Resource Management, and Fleming Crim, Chief Operating Officer, for final decision. Employees may submit questions and concerns regarding COVID-19 workplace safety to covid-concerns@nsf.gov.

Face Masks

As indicated in the COVID-19 guidance posted on InsideNSF and most recently communicated at the Director's Town Hall on January 27, 2021, all federal employees, contractors and visitors entering the building must wear a mask that covers the nose and mouth and is in accordance with current CDC and OSHA guidance. Masks should fit properly, i.e., snugly around the nose and chin with no large gaps around the sides of the face. Novelty/non-protective masks, masks with ventilation valves, or face shields as a substitute for masks are not permitted.

Disposable masks are available upon entry at guard stations for use by individuals who do not have a mask. Reusable cloth masks are available for employees and contractors at the mailroom window on the first floor, east wing. Up to two reusable masks per person will be distributed.

Masks must be worn at all times in the building with the following exceptions: (1) when an individual is actively eating or drinking while maintaining physical distancing in accordance with CDC guidelines or (2) when an individual is alone in an office with floor to ceiling walls and a closed door. Masks must be worn by individuals in workstations.

Individuals may be asked to lower their masks briefly for identification purposes in compliance with safety and security requirements.

Individuals who are unable to wear a mask properly or cannot tolerate a mask due to sensory, behavioral, or cognitive issues will not be required to wear one. Individuals for whom wearing a mask raises a disability or religious issue can submit requests for accommodations along with required documentation to the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. Employees of contractors who require a reasonable accommodation should contact their supervisors and request that the supervisor discuss the need with their contracting officer.

If an employee is not eligible for an accommodation and is not wearing a mask, the employee will be reminded to wear a mask in accordance with federal government-wide policy requiring mask-wearing in federal buildings. If the employee refuses, they will be reported to their supervisor, and may be barred from the building for the safety of others.

Contact Tracing

The NSF Safety and Occupational Health Manager will collaborate with and support the contact tracing programs of local health departments to help identify, track, and manage contacts of COVID-19 cases. The Safety and Occupational Health Manager will engage in coordination with facilities staff to implement infection control and workplace safety efforts once informed of a case of COVID-19 (either due to specific symptoms or positive test).

The Safety and Occupational Health Manager will make disclosures to local public health officials as required or necessary to provide for the public health and safety of staff and contractors, in accordance with local public health mandates. If COVID-19 cases occur within NSF headquarters, the Safety and Occupational Health Manager will recommend—in consultation with local public health officials—appropriate next steps.

NSF will notify staff and contractors of positive COVID-19 cases if the individual has been in the building within the past seven days and consistent with local and Federal privacy and confidentiality regulations and laws. In all cases, NSF will conduct sanitization and contact tracing as needed.

Travel

Through June 30, 2021, only mission-essential travel will be authorized. Essential travel must be authorized by the cognizant Assistant Director/Deputy Assistant Director/Office Head/Deputy Office Head following the guidance in OD 20-06 and stated below:

- Is the purpose of travel to perform essential duties related to the protection of life and property?
- Is the purpose of travel to ensure ongoing functioning of NSF-funded major facilities?
- Is the travel time-sensitive or can it be performed at a later date?
- Can the events associated with travel be conducted by phone or video conference?
- What is the duration of the proposed travel?

All requests and decisions must be documented. Private transportation for official travel is preferred to use of public or other communal transportation, in combination with other

safety/security guidance. Updated guidance on travel beginning after June 30, 2021 will be provided by May 31, 2021.

Employees should adhere strictly to CDC guidelines before, during, and after travel, regardless of whether the travel is personal or for official business. At this time, these include the following precautions: carefully assessing travel risk prior to travel (all travel for NSF must be authorized by the cognizant Assistant Director/Deputy Assistant Director/Office Head/Deputy Office Head), wearing a mask during all portions of a trip, maintaining physical distance from non-household members, maintaining good hand hygiene by regularly washing hands with soap and water, or using alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available, and getting tested and staying home after higher-risk travel before returning to the workplace. The CDC has extensive guidelines for both domestic and international travel, and federal workers should consult these resources carefully before deciding to travel. Additional resources for official travel can be found on the [GSA COVID-19 Information site](#) and the [CDC Travel site](#).

An individual who develops any symptoms consistent with COVID-19 during or upon returning from travel should isolate following CDC guidance and notify their supervisor immediately. If the individual was in the NSF building in the past seven days, they or their supervisor should notify the Safety and Occupational Health Manager, Barry Carlisle, at safety@nsf.gov as soon as possible.

Personnel who may have been exposed to COVID-19 during travel but have not been tested and are asymptomatic should self-quarantine in accordance with CDC guidance, which is currently for ten days without testing and if no symptoms are reported during daily monitoring, or seven days if a diagnostic specimen tests negative and no symptoms are reported during daily monitoring.

Symptom Monitoring

Employees, contractors, or visitors who do not feel well will not be permitted to enter NSF headquarters. Only Federal employees, contractors, and visitors who answer “no” to the following screening questions, which are posted at the entrance to the building, will be permitted access.

Have you experienced any of the following symptoms in the past 48 hours:

- 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

Within the past 14 days, have you been in close physical contact (six feet or closer for a cumulative total of 15 minutes) with:

- Anyone who is known to have laboratory-confirmed COVID-19?
OR
- Anyone who has any symptoms consistent with COVID-19?

Are you isolating or quarantining because you may have been exposed to a person with COVID-19 or are worried that you may be sick with COVID-19?

Are you currently waiting on the results of a COVID-19 test?

Individuals who answer “yes” to any of these questions are instructed that they may be at increased risk of COVID-19, and they should leave the building, return home, and contact their primary care provider and supervisor.

Any individual who develops [any symptoms consistent with COVID-19](#) during the workday must immediately isolate, notify their supervisor, and promptly leave the building. The individual or their supervisor should notify the Safety and Occupational Health Manager, Barry Carlisle, at safety@nsf.gov as soon as possible.

Quarantine and Isolation

Any individual with a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 should isolate, [pursuant to CDC guidelines](#), and in compliance with local laws/regulations. Personnel who have had close contact in the past seven days with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 should follow CDC and local guidance for quarantine.

Confidentiality

All medical information collected from personnel, including test results and any other information obtained as a result of testing and symptom monitoring, will be treated confidentially in accordance with applicable law, and accessible only by those with a need to know in order to protect the health and safety of personnel. Employees should contact the Division of Human Resource Management for all questions relating to personal medical data.

Workplace Operations

Occupancy

The allowable maximum daily occupancy of NSF headquarters is 25%. Based on the workforce survey results, this upper limit will provide flexibility for Directorates and Offices to plan for staff who want to work inside the building as well as accommodate ad hoc visits to the building. It will also allow the COVID-19 Coordination Team to evaluate current safety measures. NSF will consider the level of community transmission indicated in CDC’s [COVID Data Tracker County View](#) when considering whether to increase the allowable maximum daily occupancy, in consultation with the Safer Federal Workforce Task Force.

Should the occupancy limit be reached, personnel will be notified and asked to refrain from coming to the building for the remainder of the day except for mission-critical reasons, and additional individuals will be allowed to enter the building only as on-site individuals leave.

Should the limit be reached on a regular basis, Directorates and Offices will be asked to develop staggered work schedules to enable building occupancy to remain under 25%.

The Head of the Office of Information and Resource Management and the Chief Operating Officer will review any exceptions to the maximum daily occupancy limit, as advised by the COVID-19 Coordination Team and in consultation with the Safer Federal Workforce Task Force. The factors that will be considered when determining whether an exception should be granted include whether the on-site work is required by statute; necessary to perform functions or inspect equipment or systems that are integral to safety, security, or the agency's mission; essential to national security; and other factors as appropriate.

NSF's current staffing plan is for all employees to telework full-time. Employees may work in the building on a voluntary basis.

On-site capacity will be limited by each Directorate/Office to ensure workstation occupants can maintain physical distancing while in the building. Each Directorate/Office has been given floor plans indicating which workstations are too close together, and how to stagger occupancy to maintain physical distancing.

Employees who plan to work inside the building should coordinate entry with their immediate supervisor or Directorate/Office point of contact to ensure physical distancing can be maintained.

Physical Distancing

As indicated in the COVID-19 guidance posted on InsideNSF and signage around the building, individuals should maintain a distance of at least six feet from others at all times, consistent with CDC guidelines, including in offices, conference rooms, and all other communal and work spaces. Individuals on-site are encouraged to limit contact with others in the building. All meetings with more than two people must be held virtually. Personnel should use the physical markings on the floor in elevator lobbies to maintain a distance of six feet and limit elevators to two people per car standing in opposite corners. Individuals should consider social distancing options to travel safely when commuting to and from work.

Masks must still be worn when following physical distancing guidelines. Masks must be worn at all times in the building with the following exceptions: (1) when an individual is actively eating or drinking while maintaining physical distancing in accordance with CDC guidelines or (2) when an individual is alone in an office with floor to ceiling walls and a closed door. Masks must be worn by individuals in workstations. Additional guidance is provided in the Face Masks section above.

Environmental Cleaning

Enhanced cleaning is performed in all common use/high touch/high density spaces throughout the building (e.g., lobbies, restrooms, elevators, and stairwells) five times a day. In the main lobby of the building, enhanced cleaning is performed 12 times a day. Office space that is in regular use is cleaned regularly, and in accordance with CDC guidelines. Wipes, gloves, and other EPA-approved disinfectants are available in locations providing on-site services. Physical barriers such as plexiglass shields have been installed where appropriate.

In the event of a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 in the building (if the individual had been in the building up to seven days prior), enhanced environmental cleaning will be performed in accordance with CDC and GSA guidance. If such enhanced cleaning is required, NSF will wait 24 hours before cleaning or disinfecting. If 24 hours is not feasible, NSF will wait as long as possible. Personnel and visitors may be asked to vacate the affected space until cleaning or disinfection is completed. The Division of Administrative Services will determine the appropriate scope of workspace closures.

NSF will notify staff and contractors of suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases whenever the individual has been in the building within the past seven days. Suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases should be reported to the Safety and Occupational Health Manager, Barry Carlisle, at safety@nsf.gov as soon as possible.

Hygiene

Hand sanitizer stations are available at the building entrances and throughout workspaces, and contain FDA-approved hand sanitizer, with at least 60% ethanol. Stations are replenished throughout the day. Individuals who find a station needing to be resupplied should contact BuildingServices@nsf.gov.

Personnel are encouraged to wash their hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer or alcohol-based hand rubs frequently, particularly after blowing their nose, coughing, or sneezing, and after being in a public place or shared space.

Ventilation and Air Filtration

Based upon currently available information and guidance from the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers, the NSF facility was built with an HVAC system that implements best practices for fresh air, temperature, and humidity to control infectious disease. The facility design incorporates the recommended high-efficiency filtration level, has over double the recommended outside air volume, and uses MERV 13 filters.

NSF has worked with building engineers to maximize ventilation in the building. The fans are kept running 24/7 for continuous exchange of air.

NSF will continue to review available options for further improvements.

Visitors

Visitors will be allowed to enter the building on a limited basis in support of mission need. Only visitors who have answered “no” to the following screening questions, which are posted at the entrance to the building, will be permitted access.

Have you experienced any of the following symptoms in the past 48 hours:

- 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

Within the past 14 days, have you been in close physical contact (six feet or closer for a cumulative total of 15 minutes) with:

- Anyone who is known to have laboratory-confirmed COVID-19?
OR
- Anyone who has any symptoms consistent with COVID-19?

Are you isolating or quarantining because you may have been exposed to a person with COVID-19 or are worried that you may be sick with COVID-19?

Are you currently waiting on the results of a COVID-19 test?

Visitors who answer “yes” to any of the questions are instructed that they may be at increased risk of COVID-19, and they should leave the building, return home, contact their primary care provider and notify their NSF host.

NSF hosts are responsible for ensuring their visitors follow mask and physical distancing guidelines while in the NSF building.

If access is needed for a visitor (i.e., someone without an active PIV card -- former employee, vendor, visitor) the Directorate/Office point of contact or organizational sponsor should submit the visitor information into the Visitor Access System (VACS) with at least 24-hours advance notice. Further, the sponsor should act as the visitor escort or assign someone in the organization as the escort. At this time, the Visitor Center is not open so visitors will be processed at the front entrance guard post.

Staggered Work Times

On-site capacity will be limited by each Directorate/Office to ensure workstation occupants can maintain physical distancing while in the building. Each Directorate/Office has been given floor plans indicating which workstations are too close together, and how to stagger occupancy to maintain physical distancing. Employees who plan to work inside the building should coordinate entry with their immediate supervisor or Directorate/Office point of contact to ensure physical distancing can be maintained.

Elevators

Based on a space assessment of the elevators in the NSF building, elevator rides are limited to two passengers per car to allow distancing at opposite corners of elevator cars. Individuals must wear masks in elevators and in elevator lobbies. Personnel should use the physical markings on the floor in elevator lobbies to maintain a distance of six feet. The use of stairs by those who are physically able is strongly encouraged. Posted signage explains current procedures.

Shared Spaces

Shared tools and equipment must be disinfected by users anytime the equipment is used by or transferred to a new person. Standard operating procedures for disinfecting shared tools and equipment before transferring them to a new person have been developed, and staff who work in spaces where such transfers occur have been trained on using them. This includes phones, computers, and other communication devices; kitchen implements; and other office equipment. Refrigerators, water coolers, and coffee brewers with disposable cups (or a personal re-usable cup/container) and single serve condiments and creamers may be used with proper hand hygiene. NSF will provide disinfectant wipes in locations providing on-site services.

Installed visual markers will promote physical distancing within common spaces, and furniture will be removed as needed. Posted signage will outline the number of people who can use common spaces at any one time.