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PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT WORKSITE SPECIFIC PLAN

Department: Kern County Public Works Department
Contact(s): Debbie Rodriguez, (661) 862-8839, rodriguez@kerncounty.com
Worksite Location(s): Public Services Building, 2700 M Street, Bakersfield, Ca. 93301, 15 Road Yards, 3 Special Waste Facilities, 10 Transfer Stations, and 7 Landfills.

The Kern County Public Works Department developed the following Worksite Specific Plan. As the "Public Services Building" is occupied by several County departments and public agencies, this Plan was developed in coordination with the Planning and Natural Resources Department, Environmental Health Division – Public Health, East Kern Air Pollution Control District, Kern Economic Development Corporation, and Kern Medical.

Worksite Plan Overview

The Public Services Building – first floor lobby area is currently under major construction/remodel and it is not possible for all departments within the building to "open" to the public, while maintaining a safe work environment for our employees' and the general public. Therefore, it was agreed by all tenants that the Public Services Building will remain closed to the public, for the interim. In-person interaction between the public and staff will be primarily by appointment. Whenever possible, requested meetings will be conducted virtually or by telephone conference. It is not anticipated that this will create a customer service issue, as each tenant remains committed to providing services to the public.

Customers of the Public Services Building are met by on-site security staff. A drop box has been established at the front of the building for customers seeking to drop off documents to the various tenants of the building. U.S. Mail service has not been interrupted.

Customers of the Public Services Department are encouraged to submit building permits and documents electronically. Customers that seek to submit building permits and/or plans in person are allowed to do so; however, the submitted paper documents are placed in a sealed bag for 48 hours before they are processed by staff to ensure protection of staff. Customers are encouraged to pay for services on-line.

In the case that a customer must meet with a member of the Public Works Department, the public will enter through the main entrance of the building, have their temperature read by security prior to staff meeting with the customer. Staff may meet the customer outside in the front of the building, in the first floor break room which has been converted to a meeting area, and/or a conference room that allows for the required social distancing. Staff has been provided with gloves, masks and hand sanitizer for use during the in-person meeting. Staff will also be responsible to sanitize and clean all areas and equipment used. Cleaning products have been made available to all staff.

Public Works Staff will continue to work remotely, when possible. Staff are currently staggering shifts, rotating shifts, working 9/80 and 4/10 shifts to minimize employee interaction and to ensure appropriate social distancing. There are several units within the Public Works Department that cannot work remotely due to the nature of the work that is required of them. Those positions include clerical staff, fiscal staff, Building Plans Technicians, contract staff, and map counter staff. All staff have been provided masks, gloves, and hand sanitizer. Hand sanitizer dispensers have been placed by the elevators and in various open, common areas for use by staff. Cleaning products have also been made available to staff to ensure continuous cleaning of work areas.

Offsite Field Work Areas

Staff working in the field have all been provided masks, gloves, sanitizing wipes, hand sanitizers and cleaning products. Computer key boards have plastic covers over them to protect staff and to allow for a more thorough cleansing of the keyboard. Each employee will be responsible for maintaining a clean work area.

Staff using vehicles will also be required to wipe down the vehicle after each use. The department has an inventory of vehicles to allow for staff to drive solo, and in the instance that staff may have to drive with two staff members in a vehicle, staff are provided masks.

The Public Works Department recently contracted with a company to spray an antibacterial disinfectant to sanitize all offices and open areas assigned to the Public Works Department within PSB, as well as, all off site enclosed work areas which include gate houses, trailers and road yards.

A. Individual Control Measures and Screening

Temperature and/or Symptom Screening

The Public Works Department has communicated with all staff the importance of staying at home if ill. It has been made clear to all employees that it is OK to stay at home, when sick. CDC Guidelines have been forwarded to all Department employees.

The Department is located in the PSB building where Kern Medical has an office. Kern Medical staff have been conducting non-contact temperature checks and symptom screening for anyone that desired to be tested since March 2020. Kern Medical has agreed to provide non-contact temperature checks and symptom screening for all staff within the PSB building from 6:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. Staff entering the building should have their temperature checked before reporting to their designated work site. Staff working in the field will have non-contact temperature checks and symptom screening provided by their supervisors at the beginning of their shift.

Public Works Staff arriving after 9:00 a.m. should have their temperature checked by Security. The same precautions will be followed regarding temperature screening and symptom screening. Public Works Human Resources will maintain department employee symptom screens separate from personnel and medical files.

Any staff recording a temperature reading of 100.4 or higher and/or responding “yes” to any of the symptom screening questions will be directed to leave the building and not return until their temperature reading is below 100.4 for 72 hours and all symptoms are gone. Staff will also be directed to contact their supervisor as soon as possible.

Should an employee become ill at work, the employee will be sent home and asked not to return until they are symptom free. The Department will adhere to the Kern County Policy and Administrative Procedures Manual, Section 118. Sick Leave.

Should an employee contract Covid-19 or be required to self-quarantine due to an exposure, the Department will follow the healthcare provider or Public Health’s guidance. The Director may require a doctor’s note from the employee prior to their returning to work.

Public Works staff have been informed and are aware of available Emergency First Responder Sick Leave and Family Medical Leave (FMLA). Staff may also use all accruals available to them.

Public Works Human Resources will work to guide departmental staff through the process and provide necessary information and documentation to ill staff. Information on Covid – 19 and test sites will be made available to those employees that are symptomatic.

Face Coverings

The Department has secured a supply of disposable and cloth face mask/coverings for all employees. Staff have also been provided the CDC guidelines on how to care for cloth face masks. Disposable face masks will be provided to the public that have appointments with staff members, should they arrive without one. Staff will be encouraged to wear face coverings in all open/public areas within the PSB building or in the field.

B. Protecting High Risk Employees

Identifying High Risk Employees

The Department has identified the high risk employees’ based on age and/or reported underlying health condition or requested accommodation.

Department staff have been informed to contact Debbie Rodriguez for assistance to request accommodations needed due to medical issues/high risk group and/or child care issues.

At this time the department has approximately 17 employees that have been identified as high risk and 22 employees that have requested work accommodations due to medical or child care issues. The department has been able to accommodate each employees’ request by either permitting them to work remotely or take leaves available to them. Public Works will continue this practice to the extent possible.

Protecting High Risk Employees

Whenever possible, the identified staff member is allowed to work remotely; however, due to the nature of our work, this is not always an option. Therefore, if an employee's job is such that it is not possible for them to work at home, every attempt will be made to temporarily accommodate the employee by permitting the use of an alternate work schedule, staggered work schedule, and/or individual work assignments to allow for physical distancing and to provide for low community contact. The Interactive Process (I.P.) will also be utilized if work accommodations are not available to the employee. At this time, the employee will be informed of and permitted to use all leaves available to them.

Those employees with child care issues have been accommodated throughout the local emergency. Public Works has permitted staff to work remotely, part-time in the office or use EPAL full-time. Public Works Human Resources has been working with affected staff to provide resources and information. For the interim, the use of EPAL will continue through May 31, 2020. Departmental Human Resources will continue to work with staff that may have child care issues after June 1, 2020.

Masks, gloves and cleaning products have all been made available to our high risk employees'. Public Works Human Resources has been working and will continue to work with all high risk employees.

C. Physical DistancingTelework Options

Due to the nature of our work, the department has had to employ several different staffing models. Staff whose work can be completed remotely have been able to do so full-time, while other staff have staggered their work schedules by rotating their work days in the office and at home. Several other staff have worked full-time in the office and have been able to socially distance their work areas.

Staff working in the field are better able to socially distance due to the nature of their work. Many of them work independently, drive solo in vehicles and are working either a 9/80 or 4/10 work schedule.

Supervisors and Managers review work as projects are completed and for staff working remotely, supervision is maintained through daily/weekly telephone conferences.

ITS has assisted the department by providing VPN's access to 121 staff members. Each conference room has the capability for teleconferences and video conferencing.

Scheduling Adjustments

There are currently 186 staff members working alternate work schedules and 46 staff members working remotely from home. Staff are also staggering their work schedule to limit the amount of staff in the office at one time.

Workstation Adjustments

For those employees that are required to work in the office, management has ensured that employee workstations and cubicles are 6 feet apart from one another to ensure the required distance between workstations.

Other Physical Distancing Strategies*1. Limited Access to Common Areas.*

Staff have been informed that they are not to congregate in the break rooms and open areas on the 4th and 5th floors. Use of break rooms are limited to two staff members at one time and employees have been instructed to clean and sanitize areas and equipment that they have used. Staff located on the first floor are unable to use the first floor break room as it is currently being used as an additional meeting area for staff.

Building elevators are limited to three riders or less.

2. Social Distancing In-person Meeting

All meeting rooms have been marked for the required 6 feet for social distancing. Staff have been informed to ensure that there is 6 feet in between chairs when required to attend an in-person meeting. TEAMS meetings have also been established so that staff can attend meetings by teleconference or virtually.

3. Large Departmental Gatherings

The department has had to postpone in-person trainings and departmental New Employee Orientations. The department is currently transitioning to virtual meeting through the use of TEAMS, teleconferencing and the use of off of the shelf training products.

*4. Department Steps Taken**a. Directional hallways and passageways for foot traffic.*

Traffic has already been rerouted due to the first floor lobby construction and this will remain in effect for the foreseeable future.

b. Designation of separate routes for entry and exit into office spaces.

Separate routes for entry and exit into office spaces have already been designated due to the first floor lobby construction and this will remain in effect for the foreseeable future.

c. Number of staff permitted in an elevator.

Three staff members are permitted to ride the elevator in the PSB building at one time. Appropriate signage will be placed at the entrance of the elevators.

d. Staggering employee breaks.

Prior to Covid-19, employee breaks were staggered. This practice will continue into the foreseeable future.

e. Discontinuation of non-essential travel

No travel has been approved.

f. How will guests be directed to meeting rooms to avoid congregation in Lobbies.

The PSB building is currently closed to the public due to the construction in the first floor lobby area. All other meetings with Public Works staff are scheduled by appointment, in thirty minute intervals, with no more than two adults in attendance per meeting. The staff member will be responsible to go to the first floor to escort the customer up to the scheduled meeting area and upon conclusion of the meeting, the staff member will be responsible to escort the customer back down to the first floor exit.

Customers will be encouraged to schedule telephone conference meetings, email questions/concerns for response by staff, and/or communicate via Teams, Skype, and etc.

g. Utilization of virtual tools to hand-off information to between staff.

The use of email will continue to be used as a tool to forward information between staff. TEAMS will also be utilized to conduct department meetings.

D. Additional Measures to Limit Exposure to the Public

The PSB building is currently closed to the public due to the construction in the first floor lobby area. The public has been notified of the construction through the Public Works website and voice mail. The public is encouraged to contact staff by email and/or submit their building permits and documentation on-line.

Members of the public that require an in-person meeting will be provided masks to limit staff exposure. Additionally, staff is responsible to sanitize the work area and any equipment used promptly after the meeting.

Gloves, masks, and hand sanitizer are readily available for use by staff.

E. Ensuring a Clean and Hygienic Work Environment

1. Department's Plan for Maintaining Cleanliness.

Staff will be responsible to ensure that their work station is clean and sanitized on a daily basis. The department currently has staff that provides a deeper cleaning of offices and open Public Works areas. All staff are responsible to sanitize conference rooms and break room areas used. General Services provides cleaning services to all open public common areas.

Additionally, staff working off site are responsible to clean daily equipment and common areas used. Vehicles must be wiped down daily after each use by staff.

2. Describe the adequacy of cleaning supplies?

As an essential department, Public Works had been ordering supplies for staff since the inception of the local emergency. At this time, the department is fully equipped with cleaning supplies.

3. *Do employees have access to necessary products for sanitization? Are employees allowed extra time for handwashing?*

Yes and yes. Employees have been provided the CDC guidelines for hand washing.

4. *Have employees been supplied with disinfectant/cleaner for their workstations? Have employees been given extra time to disinfect/clean their workstation at the start and end of their shift and as needed?*

Disinfectant/cleaners have been placed in common areas for staff to use. Staff have been informed that they may use time within their work day to disinfect/clean their workstation as needed.

5. *Has hand sanitizer been made available to the public?*

Yes, hand sanitizer dispensers have been placed in the open areas of the 4th and 5th floors. Hand sanitizer is also available on the first floor by security.

6. *Have employees been asked to bring their own face coverings or will disposable face coverings be made available to visitors?*

The department has provided cloth and disposable face coverings to all Public Works employees. Staff, if they choose, may use their own face coverings. Visitors to the Public Works Department will be provided face coverings, as necessary.

7. *Will members of the public be refused entry without face covering or will disposable face coverings be made available to visitors?*

Customers that have an appointment with Public Works staff will be provided a disposable face mask covering.

F. Training and Communication of Managers/Supervisors/Employees

1. *What is your department's plan to communicate and train all staff on your Worksite Specific Plan and the Guidelines for Safely Returning Kern County to Work?*

The Public Works Department will continue to use email as its primary source of communication. The department has recently implemented TEAMS which will be used to communicate and train staff. Management and supervisors have been informed of the *Guidelines for Safely Returning Kern County to Work* with the direction to meet with their staff to discuss any concerns/issues that they may have or foresee. Department Human Resources is also providing assistance to all department staff.

2. *How have you communicated the County's goals in protecting employees and the public from infection to managers and supervisors?*

The Department has communicated with managers and supervisors through Division meetings via teleconference and emails. The department has recently implemented TEAMS and will be using this form of communication as well. All staff have been informed of the County's goals in protecting the employees and the public.

3. *How have you trained supervisors to isolate and send home any employees exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19?*

Yes, since the beginning of the local emergency, supervisors were trained on how to recognize the symptoms and possible exposure to COVID-19. Public Works Human Resources are contacted by supervisors to assist with employees and/or exposure issues. The department will follow Kern County Public Health's and CDC Guidelines.

4. *Have all staff been provided with the Guidelines for Safely Returning Kern County to work?*

The Guidelines and the Department's Specific Plan will be emailed to all employees upon approval by County Human Resources. The Specific Plan will be discussed with Managers and supervisors with the intent that each division will hold a TEAMS meeting or teleconference meeting with staff to discuss the guidelines and specific plan. All staff of the Public Works Department will receive a copy of the Guidelines and the Department's Specific Plan.

5. *What is your process for receiving employee inquiries about deficiencies in the implementation of your Worksite Specific Plan?*

Staff will be encouraged to email their supervisor/manager, and Departmental Human Resources with any questions or concerns related to the Worksite Specific Plan. Senior management will be reviewing and evaluating the Worksite Specific Plan on an as needed basis. Revisions to the Worksite Specific Plan will be made as required.