



# COVID-19 Protocols for Forest Service Volunteer Projects



This protocol document is intended to provide methods to reduce the chances of introduction and transmission of COVID-19 between members of a field crew and with the visitors to the Forest. Working in close proximity to others will put you at a greater risk of contracting COVID-19.

Take the following precautions to reduce and/or prevent the spread of this disease. Please consult the CDC website for further (and any) updated information—[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

## Prior to the Project:

1) Before You Leave Home: Crew members should **self-screen** themselves to determine if they have any symptoms associated with COVID-19. **Stay home** if you or anyone you closely associated with experienced any of the following symptoms within the past 14 days:

- A new fever (100.4°F or higher), or felt like you had a fever?
- A new cough that is not because of another illness?
- A new shortness of breath that is not because of another illness?
- A new sore throat that is not because of another illness?
- Sore muscles not because of existing illness, or not from exercise or injury?
- Loss of taste or smell not related to another illness or allergies?
- Were you or they diagnosed with an infection?
- Were you or they exposed to someone known to be infected?
- Did you or they travel from or through communities with current cases of COVID-19?

2) At the trailhead: As a group please address, again, the symptoms of COVID-19 with crew members and verify that each member has **at least** one face mask for the duration of the project.

--It is suggested that a thermometer be used to take the temperature of each crew member before starting the trip/project; remember to include the thermometer in the group first aid kit.

--Maintain six feet of social distance while in a group and 15 feet of distance between crew members and other trail users when hiking/riding.

--If crew members are with friends or family whom they live with on a regular basis, they may stand and work closer to each other.

--Remind everyone to sneeze or cough into the crook of their arm **and** to avoid touching their eyes, nose and mouth.

-- If you start to feel bad at any point during the hike/ride to the project or campsite, turn around and go home. Be sure to alert your project leader of your change in plans to not participate in the project.

Remember: crew members and other people you come into contact with may not show signs and symptoms of COVID-19.

### **During the Project:**

Trail work inevitably puts us in closer contact with our fellow crew members. Wearing personal protective equipment (**PPE**) (**face masks, eye protection, work gloves**) will provide a barrier between you and other crew members. Hand sanitizer should be plentiful and readily available at all times.

Take the time during the project safety talk at the beginning of the day to reiterate the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and the methods and procedures to reduce transmission of the disease. The “**Circle of Death**” concept when working with tools around others now takes on new meaning in this time of COVID-19 and potential transmission. Keep at least six feet of distance between each crew member.

Things to keep in mind while working:

- Whenever possible each crew member should have their own tool for working and not share the tool(s) with anyone else.
- In the event that tools are shared, be sure to disinfect tools and work gloves with hand sanitizer. Disinfect tools and work gloves used during breaks and lunchtime at the very least. Be mindful of touching your face with your work gloves to reduce the chance of potential transmission. Maintain social distancing.
- Place tools in the sunshine when not in use to also assist with disinfection (rotate the tool to ensure sunlight touches every part of the tool).
- During breaks and lunchtime, maintain at least six feet of social distance and move away from the trail to avoid contact with other trail users.
- Social distance as much as possible during the project. Do not linger in another person’s “Circle of Death” for longer than necessary. Remind other crew members to social distance if you notice they are not doing so.
- Work in sub-crews of no more than five people. Keep these same groups throughout the duration of the project.

### **At Camp:**

Oftentimes, the highest chances of transmission for any illness are at camp. Communal cooking, gathering around a common focal point, cramped sleeping conditions, and improper hand washing habits will all increase the chances of transmission. To reduce those chances, each member should adhere to the following procedures:

- Disperse tents of crew members as much as possible; at least six feet.
- Members (and their immediate family members or those they live with on a regular basis) should bring their own food and prepare, cook, and eat with social distancing in mind. No communal pot meals.
- When gathering in an area, keep at least six feet of social distance between crew members (and immediate family).

- Have a handwashing station with a container of water and hand soap available; ensure everyone is aware of this location and the procedures for hand washing (i.e., wash hands for 20 seconds at least after using the restroom and before preparing meals).

### **Potential Illness and Transmission:**

If at any time during the project, a crew member begins to show signs and symptoms of COVID-19, isolate this crew member and any other members if they show signs and symptoms. Provide care to members who show signs and symptoms as best as possible while utilizing the necessary PPE (nitrile gloves, face mask, eye protection). At this point the project and trip will need to end and all members should evacuate immediately; additional assistance may be needed for sick crew members.

As early as possible, contact the Forest Service Volunteer Coordinator to alert them of the situation.

**Note:** Cloth face coverings should not be placed on anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance. ([www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov))

### **After the Project:**

- It is imperative that the project leader and crew members take necessary precautions post-project to clean and sanitize tools, PPE, clothing, and any other equipment used during while working and in camp.
- The project leader should also follow-up a few times over the next 14 days with each member to determine if they have developed any signs and symptoms of COVID-19 since the project ended; crew members should also be in contact with the project leader to determine if that person has/has not contracted COVID-19.
- Alert all members of the recent project if a member shows sign/symptoms of COVID-19 and if they were formally diagnosed with the disease.
- Contact your Forest Service Volunteer Coordinator in the event that someone on the crew showed signs/symptoms or tested positive for COVID-19 before, during or after the project (do this as soon as possible).

Project leaders and crew members will adhere to the protocols and procedures outlined above to reduce the chances of transmitting and contracting COVID-19.

**Do not become complacent** over the course of the project; Keep appropriate social distance from others, wear and maintain PPE, and wash/disinfect your hands and surfaces frequently.

If you have a **pre-existing condition and/or are in an older age group**, consider not attending the project or work with the project leader to determine what can be done by yourself and still accomplish the goals for the project.

It is possible to have a successful, safe, AND fun experience while out with others. Take care of yourself and others and know you're making a difference as a dedicated land steward!

Note: Please address the hazards and safety precautions for COVID-19 during the Tailgate Safety Briefing (Safety Talk) and have each person sign the Tailgate Safety Form acknowledging they attended the Briefing and understand the hazards and mitigations for COVID-19, in addition to hazards and mitigations for trail work.