

Subject: COVID-19
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March 5, 2020

I and leadership across NOAA are committed to the health, safety, and wellbeing of all NOAA staff and are aware of the growing number of concerns and questions we are hearing from many of you regarding the Coronavirus (COVID-19).

Ben Friedman previously sent an all-hands email providing informational sources and steps we can all take to protect ourselves, our families, and our colleagues, whether addressing the Coronavirus or the flu virus. I would like to now take the opportunity to highlight information sent out in the Department's all hands email this morning.

The [Office of Personnel Management \(OPM\) preliminary guidance](#) mentioned below touches upon agency continuity of operations (COOP) plans, telework, visitor access to federal offices and buildings, and domestic and international travel, including that agencies begin to reduce non-essential travel as appropriate.

Taking into account the OPM preliminary guidance and pending additional specific guidance, please work within your respective Line or Staff Office on any specific issues or concerns pertaining to travel, telework, or leave. I encourage all supervisors and employees to review their current telework policies and agreements, and that supervisors provide flexibility based on the circumstances as appropriate. Please also review information technology systems and back-up procedures to ensure mission essential function and operations.

I also ask that employees and supervisors consider any potential risk versus benefit when it comes to travel or participation at widely attended conferences or events. Employees planning to engage in foreign travel should follow OPM's preliminary guidance, consult their supervisor, and first visit the [State Department travel advisory website](#) to check for COVID-19 warnings specific to their destination.

For more information about the Coronavirus, please visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.

Keeping our workforce safe is my top priority as we all remain vigilant regarding COVID-19. I am proud and grateful for your dedication to the NOAA mission and the service you provide to the American people.

Sincerely,



Neil A. Jacobs, Ph.D.

Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Environmental Observation and Prediction

Performing the duties of Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere



50 Years of Science, Service, and Stewardship

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