College of the Environment COVID-19 Response Guidance: Remote Work is the Default

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Relevant UW Guidance:
- UW's Coronavirus Website: Operations

Please note that in the College of the Environment, it is an expectation that supervisors are providing telework options to all employees, including student employees, whose job duties can be performed remotely without hampering operations. That is to say, remote work should be the default at this time unless the work cannot be accomplished remotely.

Currently, employees are allowed to come into their lab and office space to work if they are following social distancing and have a health and safety plan* in place – but should be encouraged not to if their work can be done remotely. Please also think about prioritizing remote any work at this time to enable employees to be able to work from home for the next several weeks.

When making these decisions, supervisors should consider not just their own research/work priorities and whether or not they or their employees are likely to become sick, but also how they can help prevent others in our community from being put at risk.

Please note that in issuing the new King County public health orders on March 15, King County Executive Dow Constantine stated the following [emphasis mine]:

“We are at a critical moment in this crisis. We are leaving the phase of COVID-19 outbreaks in concentrated areas of the county, and entering the phase of potentially rapid and widespread infection.

It is time, right now, for people to assume that they and everyone they meet is infected, to avoid any unnecessary interactions that might lead to further infection, and to wait and monitor to see if they have in fact been infected so that they can isolate and recover without presenting a risk to others. Go to work if you must. But hunker down if you are able. Postpone anything you can. Treat the next two weeks as a period of self-quarantine, to protect yourself and the lives and health of your loved ones and the entire community.”

As responsible members of this community, please help me share this message with your supervisors.

* A health and safety plan documents what you are doing to:
  a) Keep your communal spaces clean and ensure appropriate behaviors, e.g.,
     • Make remote participation available. Ask individuals who are sick, or are in high risk groups, to access remotely.
• Try to find ways to give people more physical space. Make sure the work space is configured to allow for social distancing, or a 6 foot distance between people. If a small, in-person meeting is required, people should, at a minimum, sit every other seat.

• Practice good hygiene.
  a. Stay home if you feel sick.
  b. Cover your mouth and nose with your elbow or a tissue when you cough or sneeze, and immediately dispose of the tissue.
  c. Wash your hands often with soap and water, for at least 20 seconds, or use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
  d. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

• Make hand sanitizer and cleaning supplies available. Please announce that availability to all team members.

• Disinfect high touch surfaces (e.g., table tops, chair arms, door handles, lab equipment, keyboards, laptops) before and after meetings or use. Standard cleaning products are effective against COVID-19.

b) Communicate when you will not be working. You do not have to share private health information, but you do need to tell your supervisor and employees if you will not be working as you would under normal circumstances.