



DHS Team,

It has been encouraging to watch the way that the staff of this Department has come together to help manage the potential impact of the COVID-19 virus. Please be assured that the health and safety of all DHS staff and customers is of paramount concern as we manage the impact of the COVID-19 virus. In addition, this Department must remain operational to meet our critical role in ensuring that the citizens of Maryland are receiving the assistance necessary to manage this National Emergency. This communication is designed to answer as many of your questions as possible, and to open up a channel of communication to address your concerns.

EMPLOYEE STATUS

At this time, DHS Leadership is being instructed to allow staff to telework if they are able to work remotely. Depending on the nature of the employees duties, staff may be permitted to telework full time or on an intermittent basis during the period of Elevated Level II response. Specifically, if there are essential or mission critical duties that can only be done in the office, staff will be required to report to the office for the time necessary to perform those duties and then would be permitted to telework for the remainder of the day.

Your Leadership team will advise you of your telework status as quickly as possible, and will work with you to determine your schedule. Staff who have not yet been designated for telework should continue to report to work (please see below for information on premium pay rate). **NOTE: AS OPERATIONAL NEEDS CHANGE, YOUR LEADERSHIP TEAM MAY BE REQUIRED TO ADJUST SCHEDULES.** In addition, your Leadership Team may designate new staff as essential and/or mission critical as needed to ensure continuation of operations.

The DHS Leadership Team has been instructed to find opportunities to allow staff to telework and to err on the side of expanding, rather than contracting, telework opportunities.

PREMIUM PAY RATE

For the duration of the Elevated Level II response, all work from a location other than home (including reporting to the Office, completing home visits, appearing in court, etc.) will be paid at the premium pay rate. The premium pay rate went into effect at 12:00 AM on Thursday, March 12, 2020. As with normal operations, your commute time is not compensated.

Work completed while teleworking will be compensated at your regular pay rate.

- Premium Pay Rate means: For all qualifying work (see above) staff will be credited with 2 hours of time for each hour worked.
- For example: If you work 8 hours in a day, you will be credited with 16 total hours worked. Exempt employees will receive compensatory time on a one for one basis for the additional credited hours. Non-Exempt Staff will receive cash overtime or compensatory time for the additional hours (over 40 hours in the week) at time and a half.

PROTECTION OF STAFF

The Department is working closely with the Maryland Department of Health to ensure that we are following all appropriate protocols regarding screening before accessing buildings, personal protective equipment, and the handling of possible cases of exposure.

We expect that we will be implementing new screening procedures shortly.

We continue to recommend that all staff take the following steps to protect yourself:

- Clean your hands often - wash your hands or use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Put distance between yourself and others

And to protect others:

- Stay home if you are sick
- Cover coughs and sneezes
- Wear a facemask if you are sick
- Clean and protect frequently touched surfaces

The Department will continue regular cleaning of all facilities.

Appointing Authorities are empowered to make decisions that they feel are in the best interests of their staff to ensure that potential exposure to the COVID-19 virus is minimized. This includes barring staff or clients exhibiting flu like symptoms from DHS offices.

STAFF WHO BECOME ILL

Staff who are exhibiting flu-like symptoms should not report to work. Flu-like symptoms include fever, chills, cough, sore throat, runny nose, body aches, headache, tiredness, diarrhea, or vomiting. Fever is usually described as a temperature of 100.4° F (38° C) or greater.

Staff who become ill will be required to use accumulated leave (sick, annual, personal, or compensatory time) for the period of their own personal illness or while taking care of family members. Staff who exhaust all accumulated leave will be eligible to receive advanced sick leave.

Staff may return to work after an absence of 5 to 7 days due to flu like symptoms without providing medical documentation. Staff may return after being fever free for a period of 24 hours.

TIMESHEETS

The Department of Budget & Management (DBM) is creating new Workday codes for managing timesheets impacted by the management of our response to the COVID-19 virus. One of the new codes will be used to identify time that is to be credited at the premium rate as indicated above. In addition, DBM may create new leave codes and/or Worktags. HRDT will be sending full instructions for the completion of your timesheets as soon as DBM provides full information.

This is a fluid and unique situation. It is our intent to help to avoid confusion by communicating changes as quickly as possible, but with accurate and reliable information.

If you have questions, please contact your Local Human Resource Officer. For Central Office staff, you may direct questions to HRDT at 410-767-7879. You may also submit your questions by submitting a form that can be accessed by [CLICKING HERE](#).

Human Resources Training & Development (HRDT)