



Federal Trade Commission

COVID-19 Safety Plan

Updated December 2022

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Introduction

The safety and security of the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) Community is the agency's top priority. The FTC Safety Plan was developed in coordination with the FTC's Pandemic Response Team (PRT), and is organized to address the unique circumstances of the following groups:

- FTC federal employees
- FTC contractors, unpaid interns, and volunteers
- Visitors to FTC offices

This Plan is a living document that will be updated to incorporate guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Where a locality has imposed additional pandemic-related requirements more protective than those set forth in this Plan, those requirements should be followed in Federal buildings and on Federal land in that locality.

This Plan is based on further information to executive departments and agencies regarding implementation of Executive Order (EO) 13991, signed by President Biden on January 20, 2021; M-21-15 on COVID-19 Safe Federal Workplace: Agency Model Safety Principles, issued by OMB on January 24, 2021; M-21-25, on Integrating Planning for A Safe Increased Return of Federal Employees and Contractors to Physical Workplaces with Post-Reentry Personnel Policies and Work Environments, issued by OMB on June 10, 2021; and updated COVID-19 Workplace Safety: Agency Model Safety Principles, issued by the Safer Federal Workforce Task Force ("Task Force") on September 13, 2021.

In March 2020, the FTC established mandatory telework for most of its approximate 1,200 employees. The FTC's information technology solutions support secure remote work for most roles, except for a small number of staff assigned to activities that must be done in the office, such as managing mail, security, benefits and retirement processing, information technology hardware, and other mission essential work. FTC lifted mandatory telework on February 1, 2022, and began a seven-month transition period before fully returning to the office in September 2022.

The Executive Director and other agency leaders have regularly communicated the FTC's COVID-19 policies and practices to staff during the pandemic, which has included direction and guidance on telework, health and safety policies, and building access. The agency has made all communications, guidance, policies, and other resources available to staff through SharePoint and on its intranet. The FTC also prominently posts signs throughout the buildings to communicate policy for staff and visitors and to reinforce safety protocols.

COVID-19 Coordination Team

The FTC established the PRT to oversee and guide the agency's response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, which continues to meet at least weekly. This team includes representatives from across the agency including the Executive Director, Bureau and Office leadership, the Chief Human Capital Officer, Occupational Safety & Health Management, the General Counsel's office, and the Chief of Acquisitions. The PRT uses OMB memo M-21-15 and CDC guidance, along with current public health data in each of the agency's operating localities, to guide FTC operational decisions and regularly briefs the union on agency matters, including guidance around COVID-19 and related issues. Also, the FTC regularly communicates with Facility Security Committees in its tenant spaces to stay abreast of developments.

The PRT, in consultation with the Commission Chair, makes decisions on the agency's operational changes (phase/telework status) based on a variety of factors. The FTC determines the operating status for each of the FTC locations based on the specifics of the local area and the safety requirements issued by that area's local government.

Levels of COVID-19 Community Transmission

FTC relies on the CDC COVID-19 Community Levels, which measure the impact of COVID-19 illness on health and healthcare systems by county, to inform the appropriate prevention strategies, such as mask requirements and avoiding crowding, based on county transmission rates reported by the CDC. Each Friday, the PRT evaluates CDC-reported county transmission rates and then adjusts status of FTC office locations as needed for the following week via emails and posts the status on the FTC's SharePoint site.

FTC staff and visitors are required to complete an FTC Facilities COVID-19 Screening form before entering the building regardless of the current community level. Masks, while not required in low and medium levels, may be worn voluntarily by staff and visitors.

During Community Levels of HIGH, in addition to completing an FTC Facilities COVID-19 Screening form before entering the building, all individuals are required to wear a mask while in the FTC buildings and are encouraged to avoid crowding especially in circumstances where they have prolonged contact with multiple individuals in a closed environment, such as during meetings, and employees should limit gatherings in breakrooms and other common areas.

Vaccination Requirements for Federal Employees

To ensure compliance with an applicable nationwide preliminary injunction, which may be supplemented, modified, or vacated, depending on the course of ongoing litigation, the FTC will take no action to implement or enforce the COVID-19 vaccination requirement pursuant to Executive Order (E.O.) 14043 on Requiring Coronavirus Disease 2019 Vaccination for Federal Employees. Any aspects of the FTC's COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan related to the vaccination requirement pursuant to E.O. 14043 are not in effect and will not be implemented or enforced by agencies while the injunction is in place.

As part of implementing E.O. 14043, FTC did collect vaccination information from employees up until the E.O. was enjoined. FTC has paused collecting this information; however, in requesting vaccination information from employees, the FTC: (1) complies with any applicable Federal laws, including requirements under the Privacy Act and the Paperwork Reduction Act, and any applicable collective bargaining obligations; (2) takes steps to promote privacy and IT security, while also providing the relevant information to those who need to know in order to implement the safety protocols; (3) consults with its Agency Records Officer, Chief Information Officer, and Senior Agency Official for Privacy to determine the best means to maintain this information to meet the agency's needs; and (4) only disseminates this vaccination information to the appropriate agency officials who have a need to know to ensure effective implementation of the safety protocols, which, in many cases, includes the supervisor level. FTC continues to preserve vaccination status information in accordance with the Federal Records Act and other records requirements.

Leave Related to Vaccination for Federal Employees

Leave to obtain Vaccination

As long as implementation of E.O. 14043 is enjoined, vaccination is not required; however, employees may take up to four hours of administrative leave for primary series COVID-19 vaccination doses as well as booster shots. The administrative leave will cover the time it takes to travel to the vaccination site, receive the vaccine dose, and return to work. If an employee needs to spend less time getting the vaccine dose, only the needed amount of administrative leave should be granted. Employees should obtain advance approval from their supervisor before using administrative leave for purposes of obtaining a COVID-19 vaccine dose. Employees who experience side effects from the vaccine will be granted administrative leave.

Leave to Accompany a Family Member to Obtain Vaccination

Employees may take up to four hours of administrative leave to accompany a family member¹ being vaccinated.

Vaccination Requirements for Contractors

To ensure compliance with an applicable nationwide injunction, the FTC will take no action to implement enforce E.O. 14042 on Ensuring Adequate COVID Safety Protocols for Federal Contractors. For existing contracts or contract-like instruments that contain a clause implementing requirements of E.O. 14042, the FTC will take no action to enforce the clause implementing requirements of E.O. 14042, absent further written notice from the FTC.

Mask-Wearing

The FTC requires staff to wear, when masks are required, a “high-quality” mask or respirator, that includes respirators that meet U.S. or internal standards (e.g., N95, KN95, KF95), or a “procedure” or “surgical”-style mask.

FTC provides “high-quality” masks at entrances and on its DC-based shuttle for FTC staff and visitors. Masks as well as hand sanitizer (60% ethanol) are located at designated stations on each floor of FTC DC offices and in designated areas of each FTC regional office. Guidance on masks per current CDC guidance is available to FTC staff on the FTC’s Transition SharePoint site.

¹ Per 5 CFR 630.201, a family member means an individual with any of the following relationships to the employee:

- (1) Spouse, and parents thereof;
- (2) Sons and daughters, and spouses thereof;
- (3) Parents, and spouses thereof;
- (4) Brothers and sisters, and spouses thereof;
- (5) Grandparents and grandchildren, and spouses thereof;
- (6) Domestic partner and parents thereof, including domestic partners of any individual in paragraphs (2) through (5) of this definition; and
- (7) Any individual related by blood or affinity whose close association with the employee is the equivalent of a family relationship.

When the PRT notifies the FTC that offices are in a LOW or MEDIUM Community Transmission Location, masks are not required for any employees, contractors, or visitors. Employees, contractors, and visitors may wear a mask if they choose.

Masks are required to be worn when the PRT notifies an office that their location's Community Level is HIGH. Masks should be worn in any common areas or shared workspaces (including open floorplan office space, cubicle embankments, and conference rooms). Masks may be temporarily removed if you are alone in an office with floor to ceiling walls and a closed door, or for a limited time when eating and drinking while maintaining distance from others.

Masks are required when using the FTC Shuttle and when there are multiple occupants in other FTC fleet vehicles, regardless of the current CDC COVID-19 Community Level.

When an FTC location requires masks:

- Masks should be well-fitting and worn consistently and correctly (over mouth and nose).
- Masks do not need to be worn when outdoors.
- Masked individuals may be asked to lower their masks briefly for identification purposes in compliance with agency safety and security requirements.

Signage and Notice for Mask Wearing

FTC maintains signs on mask wearing at the main entrances of its headquarters building, regional offices, and the plaza level of Constitution Center.

Screening Testing

The FTC discontinued its screening testing requirement based on vaccination status of staff, contractors, and visitors in August 2022. Since the FTC is not considered a high-risk setting as defined by the CDC, the agency does not have a serial screening testing program or conduct point in time screening testing.

For any testing required by the FTC for workplace exposure or official travel, employees should use locally available testing sites and may use up to one hour of administrative leave; however, supervisors have discretion to grant more leave based on the employee's circumstances.

Any testing required by the FTC either for workplace exposure or connected with a COVID-19 vaccination exception may be done during regular duty time. The FTC will reimburse employees for any required COVID-19 testing through its local travel voucher process. Guidance and instructions are available on the FTC's Intranet site.

COVID-19 Illness Notification

FTC staff are asked to notify the FTC if they have a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 and have visited an FTC building and developed symptoms or tested positive for COVID-19 within one or two days of the visit. Based on the information provided, the FTC will provide guidance on evaluating factors on assessing the likelihood of becoming infected, isolation, the any need for testing.

The FTC will record and report if an employee tests positive for COVID-19, if determined to be work-related (as defined by 29 CFR 1904.5); and the case involves one or more relevant recording criteria (set forth in 29 CFR 1904.7) (e.g., medical treatment beyond first aid, days away from

work). The agency follows state and county reporting requirements and complies with state and county contact tracing efforts.

Official Travel

Federal employees will strictly follow the most recent CDC guidance on [domestic](#) and [international](#) travel. Additionally

When Official Travel Is Approved

- FTC encourages you to be up to date with COVID-19 vaccinations and boosters before travel. Please see the section on [Vaccinations](#) for additional information on leave.
- FTC encourages you to consider being tested for current infection with a viral test as close to the time of departure as possible (no more than 3 days) before travel.
- Check your destination's [COVID-19 Community Level](#) before traveling and wear a high-quality mask or respirator (such as an N95) while on-duty and around others indoors at your destination, if your destination's COVID-19 Community level is HIGH.
- Review and follow all travel restrictions put in place by State, Tribal, local, territorial, and foreign governments; and
- Prepare to be flexible, as restrictions, policies, and circumstances may change during travel.

Traveling with Known Exposure

If you are notified that you have been exposed to COVID-19 within 10 days prior to official travel and are asymptomatic, your official travel request can be approved.

If you are asymptomatic after your exposure, in addition to the pre-travel instructions provided in the "When Official Travel is Approved" section above, you must:

- Wear a high-quality mask the entire time you are on-duty and around others indoors for the full duration of travel that falls within the 10 full days after your exposure date.
- Do not use public transportation such as airplanes, buses, and trains if you are unable to wear a high-quality mask when around others during the full duration of your travel that occurs within the 10 full days after your exposure date.
- You are required to be tested for COVID-19 5 full days following your last known exposure. That testing may need to occur while you are traveling. You are not required to delay travel while waiting for the results of the post-exposure diagnostic test.

If you develop COVID-19 symptoms after official travel has been approved, you should not travel, and instead follow FTC guidance on travel for individuals with COVID-19 symptoms.

Traveling with COVID-19 Symptoms or Positive COVID-19 Test

Pursuant to E.O. 13991 and consistent with CDC guidance, FTC supervisors will not approve official travel for FTC staff under the following conditions:

1. An individual who has COVID-19 symptoms and is awaiting diagnostic test results.
2. An individual who has tested positive for COVID-19 for at least 5 full days after their first day of symptoms, or after the date of the initial positive diagnostic test for asymptomatic individual.

Supervisors may approve official travel for an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19 and who has returned to work once they are fever free for 24 hours without using fever-reducing medication and their other symptoms are improving.

Meetings, Events and Conferences

In-person attendees at any meetings, conferences, and events hosted by the FTC, regardless of size, must follow FTC safety protocols that include an FTC health screening, mask requirements based on the Community Level of the building, and any posted physical distancing requirements. FTC staff should work with the FTC Events Team to coordinate appropriate venues and to coordinate any safety protocols needed for the event.

There are no other limitations, other than room size and established occupancy limits, applied to FTC meetings, events, and conferences at this time.

Symptom Screening

FTC requires all employees, contractors, and visitors to complete symptom screening before entering our buildings. FTC's [Facilities COVID-19 Screening](#) is available to staff on the FTC Transition SharePoint Site, and through the FTC Visitors notification process in ServiceNow. FTC's Facilities COVID-19 Screening is self-administered and is not verified by agency personnel.

Employees, contractors, and visitors who indicate that they are experiencing symptoms should not enter FTC buildings. Employees and contractors who are experiencing symptoms should follow the FTC Exposure, Isolation, and Diagnostic Testing Guide. The guide provides information on notification, isolation, and testing requirements, and information on testing reimbursement and leave.

While onsite, should employees, contractors, and visitors develop fever, chills, or other new or unexplained symptoms consistent with COVID-19, they should immediately wear a high-quality mask, available at PPE tables or similar location in FTC's buildings, and promptly leave the building.

Exposure, Isolation, and Diagnostic Testing

FTC has developed guidance around COVID-19 exposure, isolation, and diagnostic testing requirements that conform with the CDC guidance and Safer Federal Workforce Task Force safety principles. The guidance covers what to do if an individual is exposed or is sick and provides guidance on safety precautions that FTC staff should take if they have been exposed or are sick with COVID-19. The guidance is provided to FTC staff through its Transition SharePoint site.

Ventilation and Air Filtration

FTC offices under GSA commercial leases have distinct space configurations and building operational procedures that differ. However, the FTC has assessed the HVAC systems for each building and has ensured implementation of upgraded air filters in conjunction with 24/7 air circulation in accordance with GSA COVID-19 guidelines.

Office Cleaning

The FTC will continue to maintain office cleanliness levels, including regularly cleaning common use, high-touch, and high-density spaces at GSA-recommended intervals.

For regional offices, the FTC will work with Building Management to ensure proper cleanliness in FTC spaces. The FTC will continue to routinely clean and disinfect hard surfaces in common areas as part of the regular custodial services for the offices using appropriate Environmental Protection Agency-registered disinfectants.