



## Forestry Division Briefing Paper



**Date:** 3/24/2022

**Submitted By:** Cory Calnan

**Subject:**

Recission of the outdated DNRC Fire Program specific COVID-19 protocols and deferring to Montana Department of Administration (DOA) guidance.

**Desired Outcomes:**

Official recission of outdated DNRC Fire Program specific COVID-19 protocols enacted in the Spring of 2020 and 2021. Aligning current programs with standard COVID-19 guidance from DOA.

**Introduction / Background:**

DNRC Fire Protection specific policies and procedures enacted during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic are currently based on outdated and likely inaccurate information. They are no longer valid to operations in the modern COVID-19 operating environment and should be removed to eliminate confusion with other statewide direction.

**Key Points / Discussion:**

- The COVID-19 pandemic is not over. The DNRC Fire Protection Program will continue to depend on a healthy workforce of permanent, seasonal and emergency firefighters to redeem statutorily mandated fire protection responsibilities. These employees are mission critical and are relied upon to protect Montanan's lives, property, and natural resources from wildland fire during the core of the fire season. While maintaining our capacity to provide mission critical services; DNRC and interagency partners will continue minimize and mitigate risks associated with COVID-19 as appropriate on wildfire incidents.
- These Fire Program protocols were developed at a point in time where little or no other guidance existed. Over the past 24 months, much more has been learned about COVID-19 and its effects on fire response. The DNRC Fire Protection program is in a much more informed and educated place than it was in the spring of 2020.
- The original DNRC Fire Protection guidance has not adequately evolved with updates from the CDC or State of Montana.
- Protocols were enacted until rescinded but have not been reviewed for conflicts when other state guidance as it was issued.
- DOA Guidance for state employees provides adequate direction for operations in the modern COVID-19 operating environment and is what is most commonly being implemented at field offices across the agency. Managers have the necessary decision space and tools to protect their workforce should it be necessary.



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### Conclusion / Recommendation(s):

1. Rescind the following DNRC Fire Program specific COVID-19 protocols and remove the protocols from the [DNRC Fire Protection Website](#) and [Intranet](#). All protocols will be archived in the event of future needs.

2021 Fire Protection Workforce Onboarding Protocols  
2020 Form I-9 Requirements During COVID-19  
2020 Fire Protection Department Training Requirements  
2020 Fire Response Framework  
2020 Fire Facility and Fire Equipment Cleaning Guidance  
2020 Cost Guidance for Onboarding and Operating Supplies  
2020 EFF Onboarding Guidance  
2020 Fire Protection Workforce Off-Duty Guidance  
2020 Fire Facility-Campus Access Controls  
2020 Aircraft Operations Protocol  
2020 Fire Protection Workforce Daily Health Monitoring  
2020 Out of State Fire Assignment Guidance  
2020 Fire Protection Workforce Exposure Guidance

2. Defer to, and align operations with COVID-19 guidance from the Montana Department of Administration.

<https://hr.mt.gov/COVID-19>

<https://hr.mt.gov/Return-to-Worksite-Stage-3-Guidance.pdf>

### Actions/Timelines:

ASAP- Remove Fire Program Guidance from the DNRC website and Intranet. Archive for future use.

Provide communication with field offices that the outdated DNRC Fire Program specific protocols have been rescinded and direct staff to defer to DOA and Department level COVID-19 guidance.