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**Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation**  
**Fire Protection**  
**COVID-19 Recommended Actions and Guidance**

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**MT DNRC COVID-19**  
**Fire Protection Workforce**  
**Onboarding Protocols**

4/15/2020



**Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation**  
**Fire Protection**  
**COVID-19 Recommended Actions and Guidance**



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## Onboarding Protocols for the DNRC Fire Protection Workforce

Effective Date: 4/15/2020 or until rescinded/modified

### Agency Intent

The agency intent for the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation's fire preparedness, COVID-19 mitigation actions, and COVID-19 precautions in the state's fire operations are that:

- The DNRC's mission critical work, including suppressing wildfires, will continue with appropriate risk management strategies consistent with current guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and state health safety guidelines regarding COVID-19 mitigation.
- The DNRC is committed to engaging in local and statewide COVID-19 emergency response while prioritizing and balancing our responsibilities to execute our mission critical duties.
- The best way to mitigate COVID-19 exposure throughout our fire operations is to maintain our capacity to do what we do best—succeed on initial attack, build the capacity of our local partners, and support our federal partners in doing the same.
- Community preparedness and fire prevention will play a critical role leading up to the 2020 Fire Season to reduce firefighter exposure and reduce nonessential interactions.
- Management of wildfire is inherently interagency, and we are working to align national plans with ongoing efforts across Montana and the Northern Rockies Geographic Area.

### Introduction & Purpose

The DNRC Fire Protection Program depends on a combined workforce of permanent and seasonal employees 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 will minimize and mitigate risks associated with COVID-19 for our employees, their families, and the public we serve. DNRC must assure that our employees can report to work healthy and remain healthy once they arrive. By implementing a layered defense protocol that safeguards the DNRC fire response employees, we will be better able to protect Montana's communities and not contribute to the spread of COVID-19. The recommendations contained in this document represent initial actions the DNRC will undertake in establishing a multi-layer defense strategy. Additional, complimentary actions and guidance are in development.

Wildland fire operations, including high-density living/working conditions and a highly mobile workforce can create an ideal environment for the transmission of infectious diseases. To protect our personnel and the people they contact, as well as contribute to the overall public health strategy, the DNRC must do what we can to begin the core of the fire year with a workforce free of COVID-19. Assuming we can achieve that goal, it will prove critically important for the members of our mission-critical Fire Protection Workforce to remain healthy, in part, by vigilantly achieving the intent of CDC, State, Agency, and local public health guidance and perhaps even substantially exceeding that guidance to ensure that our fire response capability can be maintained. Employee onboarding and preparation for the core of the fire year during the COVID-19 epidemic will require solutions that are adaptable, scalable, and timely, with the ability to change rapidly based on new information. Existing protocols and other long-established work practices may have to be modified based on how the situation continues to develop.



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**Recommended Actions and Guidance**

The following instructions are for Hiring Managers/Supervisors who will be onboarding fire workforce employees during the COVID-19 national emergency. This protocol is intended to provide sufficient decision space to the local hiring unit as conditions in each local area differ and each onboarding situation is very different. It is imperative Hiring Managers/Supervisors must safeguard DNRC’s fire response capabilities and use provided guidance to protect the Fire Protection Workforce and ensure the readiness of operational resources.

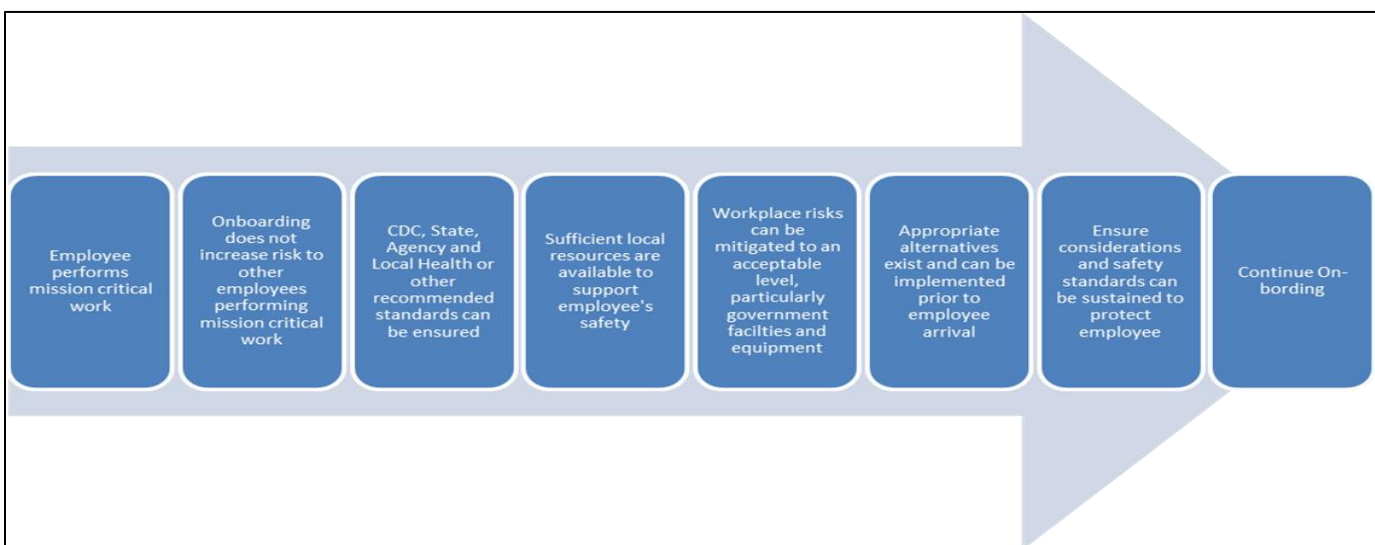
DNRC cannot provide direction for every circumstance. There will be instances when direction/policy does not foresee, and possibly even provide conflicting direction/policy. While maintaining our ability to provide mission critical services; Hiring Managers/Supervisors should use their best judgement to implement the overarching goal to do all we can to minimize and mitigate risks associated with COVID-19 for our employees, their families, and the public we serve.

In addition to this guidance, Units and Offices should coordinate activities with local public health officials. This should be a first step in making decisions about responses to the presence of COVID-19 in the communities in which DNRC operates in. Health officials can help determine which set of strategies will be most appropriate for their specific community’s situation.

This interim guidance is based on what is currently known about the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and founded on CDC recommendations for **minimal to moderate community** COVID-19 transmission like those occurring in the State of Montana. DNRC will update this interim guidance as needed or as additional information becomes available. Additional strategies may need to be considered when/if there is substantial transmission increase observed in the local community (in addition to those implemented here).

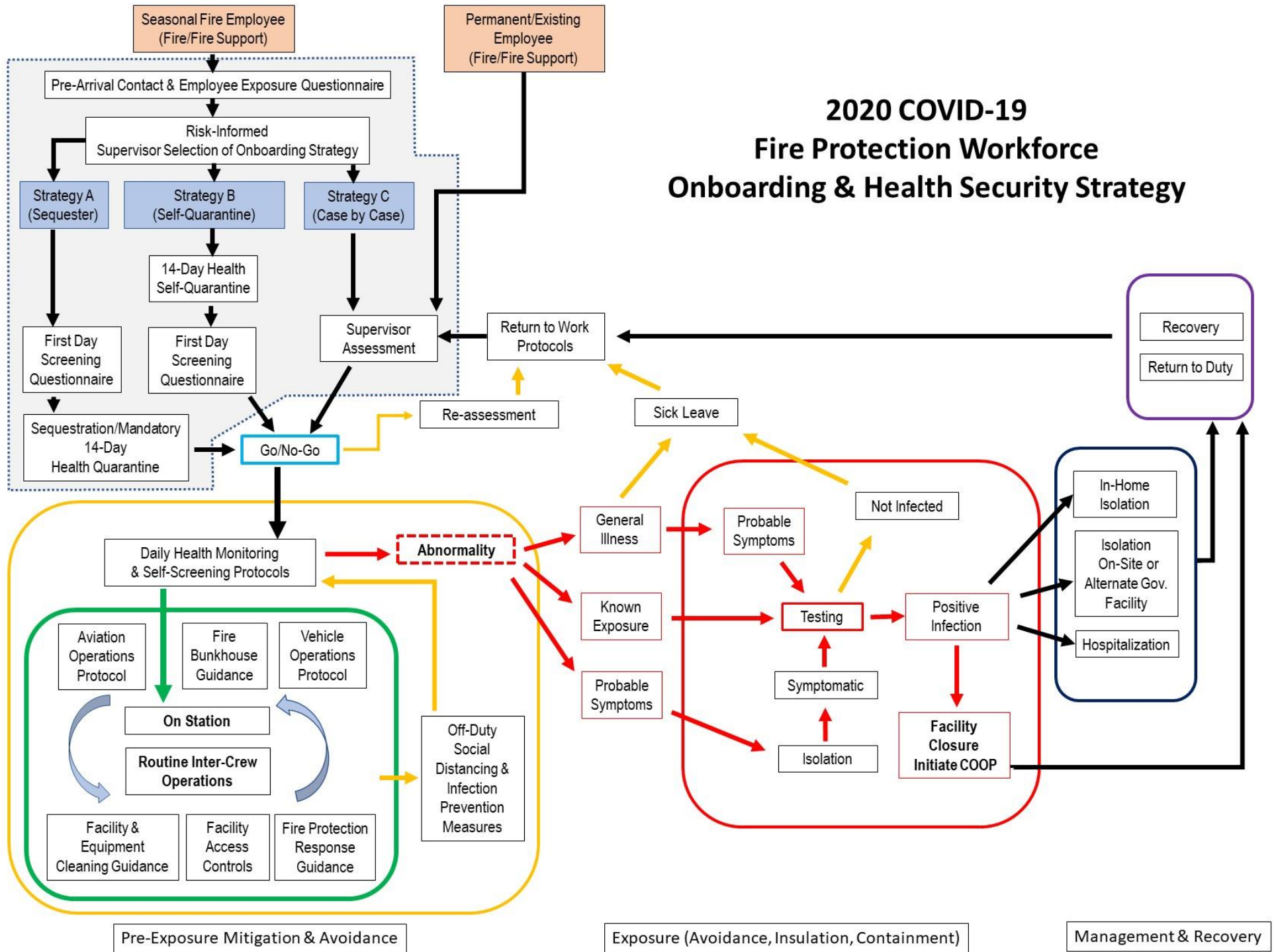
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/2019-ncov-factsheet.pdf>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-ihe-response.html>



The DNRC Fire Protection Bureau COVID-19 Planning Team recommends a strategy grounded in evaluating employee exposure, using rigorous, pre-approved criteria, followed by risk-informed selection of one of four distinct paths to onboarding and preparing members of our 2020 Fire Protection Workforce. The grey box on the strategy map on the following page depicts these onboarding strategies:

# 2020 COVID-19 Fire Protection Workforce Onboarding & Health Security Strategy





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## Step 1---Plan, prepare, and contact employee to complete exposure questionnaire

1. Coordinate with local public health officials. This should be a first step in making decisions about developing mitigations to the presence of COVID-19 in the community. Health officials can help determine which set of strategies might be most appropriate for their specific community's situation.
2. Hiring Managers/Supervisors must take actions to protect any information gathered on the questionnaires from inadvertent disclosure and ensure it is not being used in a way that constitutes unlawful disability discrimination. Please ensure that ALL documentation obtained through this process is protected as Personally Identifiable Information (PII) and properly secured per normal protocols.
3. 20-30 days in advance of the anticipated start date (or as soon as possible), Hiring Managers/Supervisors should contact the employee using information on the **DNRC Fire Pre-Arrival Exposure Screening Questionnaire** and the **CDC COVID-19 Fact Sheet** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/2019-ncov-factsheet.pdf>. Contact may be via phone, email or mail based on the best options for the local Unit.
  - a. This pre-arrival contact is intended to help advise the new employee of COVID-19 related circumstances in the local area and to advise them that modifications have been made to the traditional way of onboarding/receiving employees. Let the employees know that you'll be in touch over the next several weeks.
  - b. All incoming fire employees shall be required to complete the **DNRC Fire Pre-Arrival Exposure Screening Questionnaire**. Any medical related questions asked of incoming employees must be asked off ALL incoming employees. Medical status/vulnerabilities are not to be shared with individuals outside those with an official need to know.
4. Answers to the **DNRC Fire Pre-Arrival Exposure Screening Questionnaire** are intended to help the Hiring Manager/Supervisor make a well informed, risk-based decision on how best to proceed with an onboarding strategy and/or adjusting the hire and or workplace reporting date. For adjustments beyond the originally scheduled reporting or onboarding date, work with DNRC Human Resources to coordinate options.
5. Considerations for each onboarding selection strategy are listed in Step 2 (below)

## Step 2—Select an Onboarding Strategy

See Onboarding Selection Strategy Matrix on the next page for determining which strategy to utilize. For more detailed descriptions of what each strategy includes, see the individual protocols further down in the document.

Below are links that Hiring Managers/Supervisors may find useful in evaluating responses to the **DNRC Fire Pre-Arrival Exposure Screening Questionnaire**.

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention-Travel Notices  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/map-and-travel-notice.html#travel-1>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention-Domestic Travel Information  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/travel-in-the-us.html>
- Montana Department of Health and Human Services (DPHHS) State of Montana COVID-19 Demographics  
<https://dphhs.mt.gov/publichealth/cdepi/diseases/coronavirusmt/demographics>



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**DNRC Fire Onboarding Selection Strategy Matrix**

1. All incoming fire employees will be required to complete the DNRC Fire Pre-Arrival Exposure Screening Questionnaire. Answers to the DNRC Fire Pre-Arrival Exposure Screening Questionnaire are intended to help the Hiring Manager/Supervisor make a well informed, risk-based decision on how to best to proceed with an onboarding strategy and/or adjusting the hire and or workplace reporting date. For adjustments beyond the originally scheduled reporting or onboarding date, work with DNRC Human Resources to coordinate options. Should the onboarding strategy require additional funding to implement (anyone hired prior to their original hire date), the request and approval process will be required at least the pay period before the employee hire date.
2. Next, using employee responses on the **DNRC Fire Pre-Arrival Exposure Screening Questionnaire**; determine course of action using the following guidance:

<b>Strategy A</b> Sequestration/Mandatory 14-Day Health Quarantine	<b>Strategy B</b> 14-Day Self-Quarantine Period	<b>Strategy C</b> Supervisor Assessment (Case-by Case)
<p>The decision to sequester employees must be based on a combination of responses to the DNRC Fire Pre-Arrival Exposure Screening Questionnaire suggesting elevated risk (such as known exposure, recent foreign travel, or travel from an area of widespread COVID-19 infection) and job criticality. Other considerations may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The employee is unable to complete a period of self-quarantine (Strategy B) due to circumstances beyond their own control.</li> <li>• Onboarding without quarantine, presents an increased risk to other employees performing mission critical work.</li> <li>• Other strategies are impractical and cannot be implemented prior to employee arrival.</li> <li>• The knowledge, skills and abilities of the employee are critical/unique in the continuity of fire response operations</li> <li>• Loss of that employee would have detrimental effects to the fire response mission and therefore their health must be assured.</li> <li>• The ability of the home unit to successfully support the strategy (logistically, financially, etc.)</li> </ul>	<p>This strategy should be the primary means of onboarding employees. The decision to request employees to self-quarantine before arrival must be based on responses to the DNRC Fire Pre-Arrival Exposure Screening Questionnaire suggesting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderate risk (such as no recent illness and/or travel from areas of scattered COVID-19 infection.</li> <li>• The employee can self-quarantine themselves for the 14-day period (home, dorm, other)</li> <li>• The supervisor has good evidence that the employee will adhere to the DNRC Fire Self-Quarantine Protocols.</li> <li>• No known exposure (household, family, close or frequent contacts)</li> <li>• The ability of the home unit to successfully support the strategy (logistically, financially, etc.)</li> </ul>	<p>In some very isolated cases, a work unit may elect to allow an employee to direct enter/re-enter the workforce/workplace. The principal consideration allowing this strategy is that the employee has already undergone a period of self-quarantine of at least 14 days leading up to their first day of employment and has concluded self-quarantine just prior to the first day of work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The supervisor has good evidence and personal knowledge of the employee’s recent exposure and lack of activities.</li> <li>• Onboarding presents no increased risk to other employees performing mission critical work</li> <li>• No known exposure (household, family, close or frequent contacts)</li> <li>• No recent foreign travel or travel to areas of elevated COVID-19 exposure</li> </ul>



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### Step 3—Contact employee for pre-arrival activities and instructions

Once an onboarding strategy is selected, the Hiring Manager/Supervisor should re-contact the employee and advise them of the selected onboarding strategy. Specific pre-arrival onboarding guidance is listed below within each specific strategy. Ensure you have clearly established the employee hire date (when they go on the payroll) and the workplace reporting date as those may be different dates after establishing an onboarding strategy for each employee.

### Onboarding Strategy A: Sequestration/Mandatory Health Quarantine Protocols

This strategy seeks to eliminate inadvertent exposure and to assure a healthy fire protection workforce by requiring fire protection personnel, not currently on the job, to report to a common location (motel/hotel, camp or other facility) to be sequestered for a 14-day period in **paid status**. The DNRC would provide food, lodging, and wages to employees during this time frame. It is envisioned that employees will complete tasks and training in situations that allow for appropriate COVID-19 mitigations (social distancing, hygiene, gatherings less than 10 individuals, etc.)

#### Strategy A Supervisor/Hiring Manager Protocols

1. Logistical support of this strategy is likely to be significant. Hiring Managers/Supervisors will need begin logistical planning for where and how they will accomplish the incoming employee sequestration/mandatory health quarantine.
2. Prepare and submit requests for fire program financial support through normal processes. Should your onboarding strategy require additional funding to implement (anyone hired prior to their original hire date), the funding request and approval process will be required at least the pay period before the employee hire date.
3. Begin making arrangements for how to receive the employee, including completing required onboarding paperwork.
4. Consider what activities, work, or training employees will be engaging in during this time of quarantine.
5. Hiring Managers/Supervisors will need to re-contact the employee to advise them of the selected onboarding strategy (Sequestration/Mandatory Health Quarantine). The **DNRC FIRE COVID-19 Hiring Template Letter #1** can be sent to the employee or used to help guide the discussion.
  - a. Inform the employee that to limit inadvertent exposure and to assure a healthy Fire Protection Workforce, DNRC is taking emergency action and requiring a sequestration/mandatory health quarantine period. During this sequestration, all lodging and meals will be provided by DNRC and employees will be compensated 8 hours/day for the duration of the quarantine period. Employees will be required to perform online and virtual training during this period. Employees should plan accordingly to be committed for the duration of the quarantine (similar as they would for a 14-day fire assignment).
  - b. If the employee decides to withdraw from DNRC employment, please have them provide that decision in writing, and notify the DNRC Human Resource Office.
  - c. Confirm meeting time and location for where to report. Be specific. Consider meeting employees in a location that allows for pre-screening. Explain what to expect on arrival regarding reporting location, reporting time, social distancing requirements. Hiring Manager/Supervisors may choose to stagger start times to avoid large groups congregating.
6. Ensure all facilities, PPE, equipment, and other fire related equipment are clean and ready for issue.
7. On the report date/time, meet employee at the pre-identified sequestration/mandatory health quarantine location. Ensure safe social distancing practices.
8. Welcome the employee and complete the **DNRC Fire First Day Screening Questionnaire**.





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- a. If the answer to any of **DNRC Fire First Day Screening Questionnaire** questions are UNFAVORABLE, the employee is to be immediately isolated and await further instructions. The Hiring Manager/Supervisor should work with DNRC Human Resources to coordinate options.
9. If the answer to all questions are FAVORABLE, proceed with onboarding activities. Complete necessary first day/onboarding tasks and paperwork if not already completed. Remember to protect Personally Identifiable Information (PII).
10. Provide an adequate safety briefing to the new employee, including how the unit is responding to COVID-19. Provide the employee **DNRC Fire Workforce Statement of Personal Responsibility During COVID-19** and other pertinent protocols.
11. Submit all completed forms to DNRC Human Resources.
12. Gather emergency contact information from the employee in accordance with Unit procedures and make a schedule for daily meetings, briefings, and/or telephonic check-ins.
13. Orient the new employee to your Unit and Montana DNRC
14. Issue any equipment or hard-copy materials needed. Discuss work or training assignments for the sequestration/mandatory 14-day health quarantine period.
  - a. Provide materials and training information
  - b. Hiring Manager/Supervisors should ensure there are sufficient work assignments for employees to perform and that they monitor and hold employees accountable to meet performance standards and expectations. Throughout our response to COVID-19 supervisors may need to take creative approaches and additional steps to communicate with employees to keep them informed. Likewise, employees are required to maintain acceptable performance, communicate with their supervisors, and perform work safely.
15. Discuss timesheet set up, coding, and submission on their behalf if computer access is not yet set up.
16. Following the sequestration/mandatory 14-day health isolation period; fire operations will resume with heightened COVID-19 protocols in place. Ensure employees are briefed on applicable agency and local work unit protocols.

### Onboarding Strategy B: Self-Quarantine Protocols

This strategy should be the primary method for onboarding employees. Strategy B seeks to limit inadvertent exposure, and to assure a healthy Fire Protection Workforce, by requesting employees to complete a 14-day self-quarantine period **prior** to reporting for work **in paid status**. Protocols and information are to be provided to the employee on the considerations they should take to remain healthy and reduce the risk of exposure. It is envisioned that employees will complete tasks and training in situations that allow for appropriate COVID-19 mitigations (social distancing, hygiene, gatherings less than 10 individuals, etc.)

#### Strategy B Supervisor/Hiring Manager Protocols

1. This strategy should be the priority method of onboarding most employees.
2. Prepare and submit requests for fire program financial support through normal processes. Should your onboarding strategy require additional funding to implement (anyone hired prior to their original hire date), the normal funding request and approval process will be required at least the pay period before the employee hire date.
3. Begin making arrangements for how to receive the employee, including completing required onboarding paperwork.
4. Consider what activities, work, or training employees may be engaging in during this time of quarantine.
5. Hiring Managers/Supervisors will need to re-contact the employee to advise them of the selected onboarding strategy (Self-Quarantine at Home/Pre-Arrival Health Quarantine). The **DNRC FIRE COVID-19 Hiring Template Letter #2** can be sent to the employee or used to help guide the discussion.



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- a. Inform the employee that to limit inadvertent exposure, and to assure a healthy Fire Protection Workforce, DNRC is requiring a 14-day pre-arrival self-quarantine period. This self-quarantine is to be done in their own home or place of residence as long as they can ensure minimal risk of exposure to COVID-19. During this period employees will be expected to adhere to the **DNRC Fire Self-Quarantine Protocols** and will be compensated 8 hours/day for the duration of the quarantine period.
  - b. Discuss work or training assignments for the self-quarantine period. Employees will be expected to perform online and virtual training during this period as it is made available.
    - i. Provide materials and training information
    - ii. Hiring Manager/Supervisors should ensure there are sufficient work assignments for employees to perform and that they monitor and hold employees accountable to meet performance standards and expectations. Throughout our response to COVID-19, supervisors may need to take creative approaches and additional steps to communicate with employees to keep them informed. Likewise, employees are required to maintain acceptable performance, communicate with their supervisors, and perform work safely.
    - iii. Discuss timesheet set up, coding, and submission on their behalf if computer access is not yet set up.
  - c. If there are not enough work or training assignments, per DNRC direction, COVID-19 leave can be used to fill in the balance of the time. Check with Payroll/HR on the appropriate COVID leave code.
  - d. If the employee decides to withdraw from DNRC employment, please have them provide that decision in writing, and notify the DNRC Human Resource Office.
6. Ensure all facilities, PPE, equipment, and other fire related equipment are clean and ready for issue.
  7. On the report date/time, meet employee at the work Unit. Consider staggering employee report times to minimize large groups. Ensure safe social distancing practices can be maintained.
  8. Welcome the employee and complete the **DNRC Fire First Day Screening Questionnaire**:
    - b. If the answer to any of **DNRC Fire First Day Screening Questionnaire** questions are UNFAVORABLE, the employee is to be immediately isolated and await further instructions. The Hiring Manager/Supervisor should work with DNRC Human Resources to coordinate options.
  9. If the answer to all questions is FAVORABLE, proceed with onboarding activities. Complete necessary first day/onboarding tasks and paperwork if not already completed. Remember to protect Personally Identifiable Information (PII).
  10. Provide an adequate safety briefing to the new employee, including how the unit is responding to COVID-19. Provide the employee **DNRC Fire Workforce Statement of Personal Responsibility During COVID-19** and other pertinent protocols.
  11. Submit all completed forms to DNRC Human Resources.
  12. Gather emergency contact information from the employee in accordance with Unit procedures and make a schedule for daily meetings, briefings, and/or telephonic check-ins.
  13. Orient the new employee to your Unit and Montana DNRC
  14. Issue equipment and PPE.



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**Onboarding Strategy C: Proceed Directly to Supervisor Assessment (Case-by-Case)**

In some very isolated cases, a Hiring Manger/Supervisor may elect to allow an employee to direct enter/re-enter the workforce/workplace. The principal consideration allowing this strategy is that the employee has already undergone a period of self-quarantine of at least 14 days leading up to their first day of employment (and has concluded self-quarantine just prior to the first day of work).

1. Complete the **DNRC Fire Pre-Arrival Exposure Screening Questionnaire**.
2. On the report date/time, the employee should report to the work Unit. Consider staggering employee report times to minimize any large groups. Ensure safe social distancing practices can be maintained.
3. Welcome the employee and complete the **DNRC Fire First Day Screening Questionnaire**.
  - a. If the answer to any of **DNRC Fire First Day Screening Questionnaire** questions are UNFAVORABLE, the employee is to be immediately isolated and await further instructions. The Hiring Manager/Supervisor should work with DNRC Human Resources to coordinate options. Follow DNRC Return to Work Protocols for employee return to duty.
  - b. If the answer to all questions are FAVORABLE, proceed with onboarding activities. Complete necessary first day/onboarding tasks and paperwork if not already completed.
  - c. Provide an adequate safety briefing to the new employee, including how the unit is responding to COVID-19. Provide the employee **DNRC Fire Workforce Statement of Personal Responsibility During COVID-19** and other pertinent protocols.

**Appendices**

- Appendix #1 DNRC Fire Pre-Arrival Exposure Screening Questionnaire (Template)
- Appendix #2 DNRC Fire Onboarding Strategy Diagram
- Appendix #3 DNRC FIRE COVID-19 Hiring Template Letter-Strategy A
- Appendix #4 DNRC FIRE COVID-19 Hiring Template Letter-Strategy B
- Appendix #5 DNRC Fire First Day Screening Questionnaire (Template)
- Appendix #6 DNRC Fire Workforce Statement of Personal Responsibility During COVID-19
- Appendix #7 DNRC Fire Self-Quarantine Protocols

**Complementary Protocols**

- DNRC Return to Work Guidelines
- Fire Response Guidance
- Vehicle Operations
- Facility & Equipment Cleaning Protocols
- Fire Facility Access Control Protocols
- Off-Duty Social Distancing & Prevention Measures
- Daily Employee Health Monitoring & Self Screening Protocols



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## Appendix #1 DNRC Fire Pre-Arrival Exposure Screening Questionnaire (Template)

Please complete the following questions as truthfully and accurately as possible. Answers will not threaten employment opportunities, and honesty is for your own benefit, the benefit of your co-workers, and the public. Medical status/vulnerabilities will not be shared with individuals outside those with an official need to know. Once complete, please return to DNRC (insert location).

**INSERT QR CODE FOR SPECIFIC UNIT/AREA (if you choose to do so)**

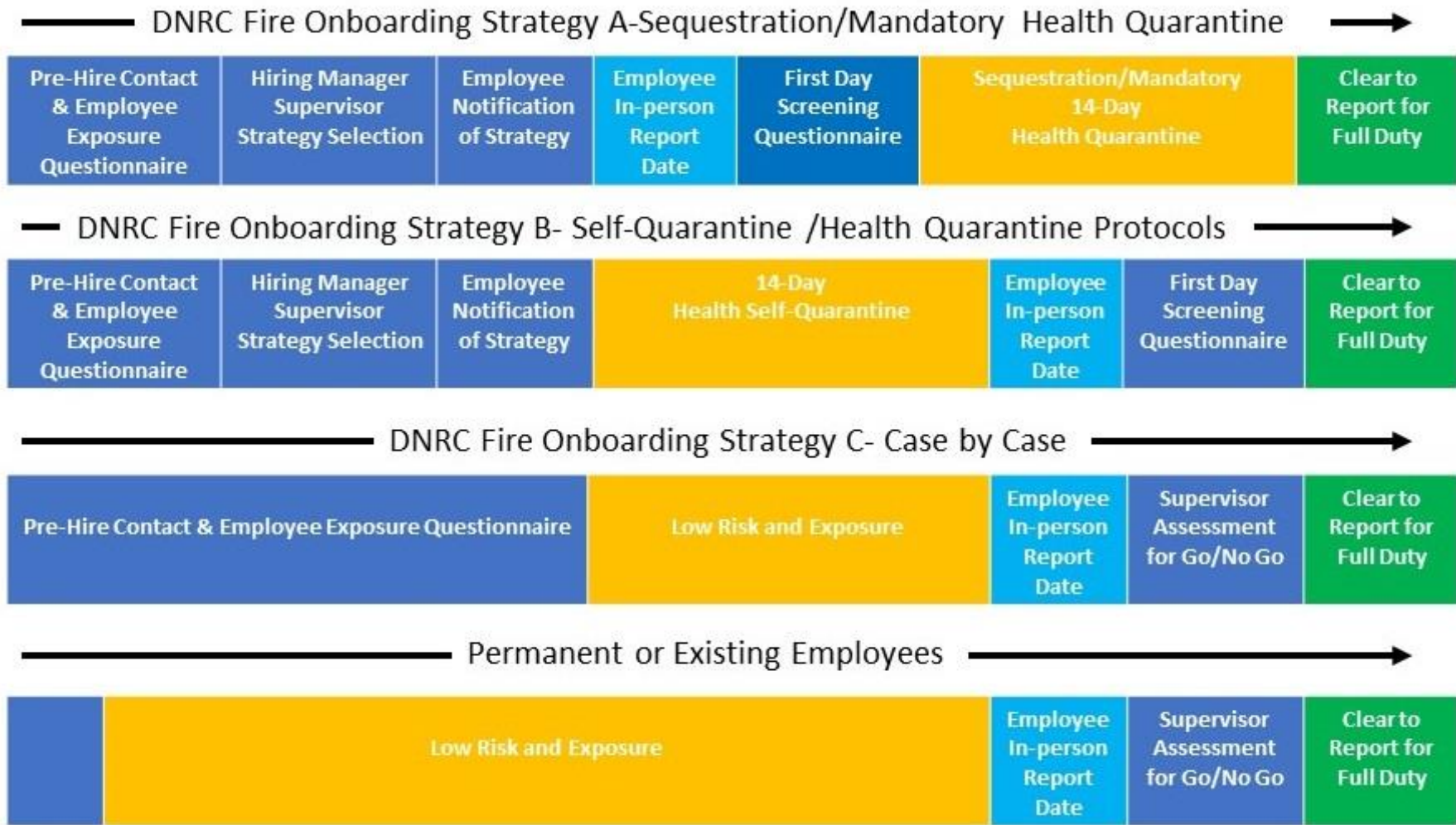
- 1) *Name*
- 2) *Email Address*
- 3) *Returning Employee or New Hire?*
- 4) *Current Address/Place of Residence*
- 5) *Are you well-rested?*
- 6) *Are you feeling in normal health?*
- 7) *Are you taking care of your personal health? (diet, mental health, hygiene, exercise)*
- 8) *Are you planning to use DNRC Owned Bunkhouse Facilities?*
- 9) *Do you have other lodging/dwelling arrangements for your course of employment with DNRC if you are not planning to use a bunkhouse?*
- 10) *To assure a healthy Fire Protection Workforce, do you have a location (your own home or place of residence) that you could self-quarantine and ensure minimal risk of exposure to COVID-19 for a period of 14 days prior to your scheduled start date?*
- 11) *Do you have reliable internet/computer access that could be used to complete online training if required?*
- 12) *Please detail any travel in the past 30 days.*
  - a. *Dates*
  - b. *Locations*
- 13) *As of 4/3/2020 the CDC is recommending that travelers avoid nonessential travel. Are you scheduled to, or are you planning to travel in the next 30 Days?*
  - a. *Locations of Intended Travel?*
  - b. *Purpose of travel?*
- 14) *Have you, someone living in your household, someone you have been in close or frequent contact with, or someone you are caring for been diagnosed with COVID-19 (Coronavirus) or had any contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19?*
- 15) *In the last 14 days have you or someone living in your household, or someone with whom you have been in close or frequent contact with, or someone you are caring for returned from, or made a travel connection through an area experiencing significant COVID-19 impacts? Visit the CDC Travel Notice Website for more information <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/map-and-travel-notice.html>*
- 16) *Do you have any questions about how DNRC is responding to COVID-19?*



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Appendix #2 DNRC Fire Onboarding Strategy Diagram





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### Appendix #3 DNRC FIRE COVID-19 Hiring Template Letter-Strategy A

Dear:

**Please read this letter carefully and in entirety.**

The DNRC Fire Protection Program depends on a combined workforce of permanent and seasonal employees 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 will minimize and mitigate risks associated with COVID-19 for our employees, their families, and the public we serve. DNRC must assure that our employees can report to work healthy and remain healthy once they arrive. By implementing a layered defense protocol that safeguards the DNRC fire response employees, we will be better able to protect Montana's communities and not contribute to the spread of COVID-19.

Wildland fire activities create an ideal environment for the transmission of infectious diseases including high-density living/working conditions and a transient workforce. There will often be situations where social distancing requirements are unattainable, unfeasible or those mitigations will pose greater risks. These, and other environmental and occupational factors (e.g., smoke, heat, plants, insects, fatigue, and physically demanding work) can increase the likelihood of disease transmission. Assuming the DNRC can begin the core of the fire year with a seasonal workforce free of COVID-19, it will prove critically important for the members of this mission-critical Fire Protection Workforce to remain healthy, in part, by vigilantly complying with CDC, State, Agency and local public health guidance, and perhaps even substantially exceeding guidance to ensure our fire response capability can be maintained.

Onboarding protocols during COVID-19 will require us to be flexible, scalable, dynamic, and timely with the ability to change rapidly based on new information. Standard protocols and other guidelines may be modified based on how the situation continues to develop.

Because the conditions in each local area differ, each onboarding situation is very different. It is imperative you understand that DNRC Hiring Managers/Supervisors are safeguarding DNRC's fire response capabilities and utilizing this the guidance to protect the Fire Protection Workforce. DNRC has elected to proceed with the following actions:

- a. To limit inadvertent exposure, and to assure a healthy Fire Protection Workforce, DNRC is taking emergency action and requiring a sequestration/mandatory health quarantine period. Please report to **XXXXXXX** at **XXXX** hours. During this sequestration, all lodging and meals will be provided by DNRC and employees will be compensated 8 hours/day for the duration of the quarantine period. Employees will be required to perform online and virtual training during this period. Employees should plan accordingly to be committed for the duration of the quarantine(similar as you would for a 14-day fire assignment). You will not be allowed to leave the facility for the duration of the sequestration/mandatory 14-day health isolation period.
- b. It is of critical importance you strictly adhere to CDC and local guidelines to minimize ANY potential for exposure/infection between now and your anticipated report date. We strongly recommend you limit non-essential travel as per CDC and State of Montana guidance.
- c. If you decided to withdraw from DNRC, please provide that decision in writing, and notify the DNRC Hiring Manager/Supervisor.
- d. Following the sequestration/mandatory 14-day health isolation period, fire operations will resume with heightened COVID-19 protocols in place (you'll be briefed on these upon arrival at the workplace).



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This interim guidance is based on what is currently known about the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and founded on CDC recommendations for **minimal to moderate community** COVID-19 transmission like those occurring in the State of Montana. DNRC Hiring Managers/Supervisors will update you as needed, or as additional information becomes available. Additional strategies may need to be considered when/if there is substantial transmission increase observed in the local community (in addition to those implemented here).

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. We want to hear what works and what doesn't directly from firefighters, and we will be establishing ways to get that feedback. If you have any questions, please contact our office as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

DNRC Hiring Manager/Supervisor

Attachments



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## Appendix #4 DNRC FIRE COVID-19 Hiring Template Letter-Strategy B

Dear:

**Please read this letter carefully and in entirety.**

The DNRC Fire Protection Program depends on a combined workforce of permanent and seasonal employees 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 will minimize and mitigate risks associated with COVID-19 for our employees, their families, and the public we serve. DNRC must assure that our employees can report to work healthy and remain healthy once they arrive. By implementing a layered defense protocol that safeguards the DNRC fire response employees, we will be better able to protect Montana's communities and not contribute to the spread of COVID-19.

Wildland fire activities create an ideal environment for the transmission of infectious diseases including high-density living/working conditions and a transient workforce. There will often be situations where social distancing requirements are unattainable, unfeasible or those mitigations will pose greater risks. These, and other environmental and occupational factors (e.g., smoke, heat, plants, insects, fatigue, and physically demanding work) can increase the likelihood of disease transmission. Assuming the DNRC can begin the core of the fire year with a seasonal workforce free of COVID-19, it will prove critically important for the members of this mission-critical Fire Protection Workforce to remain healthy, in part, by vigilantly complying with CDC, State, Agency and local public health guidance, and perhaps even substantially exceeding guidance to ensure our fire response capability can be maintained.

Onboarding protocols during COVID-19 will require us to be flexible, scalable, dynamic, and timely with the ability to change rapidly based on new information. Standard protocols and other guidelines may be modified based on how the situation continues to develop.

Because the conditions in each local area differ, each onboarding situation is very different. It is imperative you understand that DNRC Hiring Managers/Supervisors are safeguarding DNRC's fire response capabilities and utilizing this the guidance to protect the Fire Protection Workforce. DNRC has elected to proceed with the following actions:

- a. To limit inadvertent exposure, and to assure a healthy Fire Protection Workforce, DNRC is **REQUIRING** a 14-day pre-arrival self-quarantine period. This self-quarantine is to be done in your own home or place of residence as long as you can ensure minimal risk of exposure to COVID-19. During this period, employees will be expected to adhere to the DNRC Fire Self-Quarantine Protocols as well as all State and Local guidelines. You will be compensated 8 hours/day for the duration of the quarantine period.
- b. Employees will be required to perform online and virtual training during this period. When you do physically report to work fire operations will resume with heightened COVID-19 protocols in place (you'll be briefed on these upon arrival at the workplace).
- c. It is of critical importance you strictly adhere to CDC and local guidelines to minimize ANY potential for exposure/infection between now and your anticipated report date. We strongly recommend you limit non-essential travel as per CDC and State of Montana guidance.
- d. If you decided to withdraw from DNRC, please provide that decision in writing, and notify the DNRC Hiring Manager/Supervisor.





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This interim guidance is based on what is currently known about the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and founded on CDC recommendations for **minimal to moderate community** COVID-19 transmission like those occurring in the State of Montana. DNRC Hiring Managers/Supervisors will update you as needed, or as additional information becomes available. Additional strategies may need to be considered when/if there is substantial transmission increase observed in the local community (in addition to those implemented here).

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. We want to hear what works and what doesn't directly from firefighters, and we will be establishing ways to get that feedback. If you have any questions, please contact our office as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

DNRC Hiring Manager/Supervisor

Attachments



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## Appendix #5 DNRC Fire First Day Screening Questionnaire (Template)

Please complete the following questions as truthfully and accurately as possible. Answers will not threaten employment opportunities, and honesty is for your own benefit, the benefit of your co-workers, and the public. Medical status/vulnerabilities will not be shared with individuals outside those with an official need to know.

1. *Name*
2. *Email Address*
3. *Current Address/Place of Residence*
4. *Are you well-rested?*
5. *Are you feeling in normal health?*
6. *Have you been taking care of your personal health? (diet, mental health, hygiene, exercise)*
7. *Have you, someone living in your household, someone you have been in close or frequent contact with, or someone you are caring for been diagnosed with COVID-19 (Coronavirus) or had any contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19?*
8. *In the last 14 days have you or someone living in your household, or someone with whom you have been in close or frequent contact with, or someone you are caring for returned from, or made a travel connection through an area experiencing significant COVID-19 impacts? Visit the CDC Travel Notice Website for more information <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/map-and-travel-notice.html>*
9. *Do you currently have, or have you had within the last 24 hours, any cold or flu symptoms with a fever greater than 100.4 or acute respiratory distress (e.g., shortness of breath and coughing)?*



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## Appendix #6 DNRC Fire Workforce Statement of Personal Responsibility During COVID-19

The 2020 fire year is different than any we have previously experienced. This is a fluid situation with new data and information coming forward daily that leads to updating guidelines. We appreciate all everyone is doing in this continuously changing environment to stay safe and to help protect our employees, their families, and our communities from COVID-19. Across the state, Montanans are working hard to try to contain the virus and prevent any large outbreaks and the Fire Protection Workforce is no different.

Everyone has a personal responsibility to do their part to slow the spread of COVID-19. For our Fire Protection Workforce, personal responsibility is extra critical to reduce the potential to bring COVID-19 into the workplace. Our Fire Protection Workforce must adhere to state and local public health guidance to protect themselves, their colleagues and families from exposure. This can include following social distancing guidelines, avoiding restaurants, bars, and crowds, self-monitoring for symptoms, reporting potential exposure, and staying home from work if sick.

We need to remember that prevention is treatment. Social distancing, hand washing, and everything else you have been hearing are the keys to flattening the curve and keeping everyone safe.



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## Appendix #7 DNRC Fire Self-Quarantine Protocol

To limit inadvertent exposure, and to assure a healthy Fire Protection Workforce, DNRC is REQUIRING a 14-day pre-arrival self-quarantine period. This self-quarantine is to be done in your own home or place of residence as long as you can ensure minimal risk of exposure to COVID-19. During this period, employees will be expected to adhere to the DNRC Fire Self-Quarantine Protocols as well as all State and Local guidelines. Employees will be expected to perform online and virtual training during this period as it is made available. Supervisors will provide you with check-in, work and training assignments for the self-quarantine period.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/index.html>

### 1. What is the difference between quarantine and isolation?

#### Quarantine

Someone in self-quarantine stays separated from others, and they limit movement outside of their home or current place of residence. This is done to avoid being exposed to the virus. A person may have been exposed to the virus without knowing it (for example, when traveling or out in the community), or they could have the virus without feeling symptoms. Quarantine helps limit further spread of COVID-19.

#### Isolation

Isolation is used to separate sick people from healthy people. People who are in isolation should stay in a secluded area. In the home, anyone sick should separate themselves from others by staying in a specific "sick" bedroom or space and using a different bathroom (if possible).

### 2. During Self-Quarantine, seek to protect yourself and others by:

#### Knowing how the virus spreads:

- Stay informed about the local COVID-19 situation. Get up-to-date information about local COVID-19 activity from public health officials.
- There is currently no vaccine to prevent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).
- The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus.
- The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person.
  - Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
  - Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks.
  - These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.
  - Some recent studies have suggested that COVID-19 may be spread by people who are not showing symptoms.

#### Clean your hands often

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.



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Avoid close contact

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Stay home as much as possible. This will require altering obligations such as volunteer work or other areas of potential exposure while under self-quarantine.
- Put distance between yourself and other people.
- Remember that some people without symptoms may be able to spread virus.
- Keeping distance from others is especially important for people who are at higher risk of getting very sick.

Cover your mouth and nose with a cloth face cover when around others

- You could spread COVID-19 to others even if you do not feel sick.
- Everyone should wear a cloth face cover when they have to go out in public, for example to the grocery store or to pick up other necessities.
- Cloth face coverings should not be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.
- The cloth face cover is meant to protect other people in case you are infected.
- Do NOT use a facemask meant for a healthcare worker.
- Continue to keep about 6 feet between yourself and others. The cloth face cover is not a substitute for social distancing.

Clean and disinfect

- Clean AND disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily. This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks.
- If surfaces are dirty, clean them: Use detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection

Monitor yourself and those around you:

<b>If you...</b>	<b>Steps to take...</b>
If you or someone in your home might have been exposed:	<p>Self-Monitor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be alert for symptoms. Watch for fever, cough, or shortness of breath.</li> <li>• Take your temperature if symptoms develop.</li> <li>• Practice social distancing. Maintain 6 feet of distance from others, and stay out of crowded places.</li> <li>• Follow CDC guidance if symptoms develop.</li> </ul>
<p>If you feel healthy but:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recently had close contact with a person with COVID-19, or</li> <li>• Recently traveled from somewhere with active spread – within or outside the U.S.</li> </ul>	<p>Self-Quarantine</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check your temperature twice a day and watch for symptoms.</li> <li>• Stay home for 14 days and self-monitor.</li> <li>• If possible, stay away from people who are high-risk for getting very sick from COVID-19.</li> </ul>
<p>If you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have been diagnosed with COVID-19, or</li> <li>• Are waiting for test results, or</li> <li>• Have symptoms such as cough, fever, or shortness of breath</li> </ul>	<p>Self-Isolate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stay in a specific “sick room” or area and away from other people. If possible, use a separate bathroom.</li> <li>• Read important information about caring for yourself or someone else who is sick.</li> </ul>

**3. Be sure to notify your Hiring Manager/Supervisor if you develop symptoms that may require you to miss work.**