

GUIDE FOR

RETURNING TO THE WORKPLACE



IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Contents

A Message from the President	3
Guiding Principles	3
Returning to Your Work Location	4
<i>Workplace Expectations and Guidelines</i>	4
<i>Health Etiquette</i>	4
<i>Self-Monitoring</i>	4
<i>High Risk Employees and Members of Household</i>	5
<i>Phased Return</i>	5
<i>Current Staffing Options</i>	5
Health and Safety Guidance	6
<i>Face Coverings and Face Shields</i>	6
<i>Physical Distancing</i>	7
<i>Handwashing and Hand Sanitizer</i>	8
<i>Clean and Healthy Workplace</i>	8
Other Workplace Topics	9
<i>Offices and Work Areas</i>	9
<i>Restrooms</i>	9
<i>Research Laboratories, Facilities and Field/Farm Work</i>	9
<i>Meals</i>	10
<i>CyRide</i>	10
<i>Shared Vehicles</i>	10
Cyclone Wellness	11
Resources	12
<i>Internal Resources</i>	12
<i>External Resources</i>	12
<i>ISU Fact Sheets and Signage</i>	12
<i>Cloth Face Coverings</i>	12
<i>Cleaning and Disinfection</i>	13
<i>Hand Hygiene</i>	13
<i>Research Guidance</i>	13

A Message from the President

The Iowa State University community has stepped up in extraordinary ways to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our phased approach to increase operations will require us to continue to work together with creativity, innovation, and flexibility. This document provides guidance and best practices for returning to our normal work locations while mitigating the risk of infection. We all can make a difference. Please be diligent about practicing infection control, and showing compassion, patience, and care for each other.

*Wendy Wintersteen
President, Iowa State University*

Guiding Principles

Iowa State University's response to the COVID-19 pandemic prioritizes the health and safety of our campus community - students, faculty, staff, and visitors.

The primary goals of ISU's response to the COVID-19 pandemic are protecting health and safety while continuing the fundamental core missions of the university as a premier land-grant institution: education, research, and extension and outreach.

It is not expected that all risk from COVID-19 can be eliminated. The ISU community must work together to monitor, evaluate, and adapt to mitigate the risk.

ISU will align our plans and procedures with the local orders and ordinances of Ames and Story County and reopening guidance from the State of Iowa and the Board of Regents. Our plans and procedures will consider science-based guidance and incorporate recommendations from the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve, as do our knowledge and understanding of the virus and its effects. We will continue to update our plans, policies, and procedures, including this document, as appropriate to the situation at hand.

For the latest information, click [here](#) to visit the Iowa State University COVID-19 Response webpage.



Returning to Your Work Location

Workplace Expectations and Guidelines

All ISU employees are expected to comply fully with the policies, procedures, and guidelines presented in this document.

Health Etiquette

Preventing the spread of COVID-19 is a shared responsibility and must be the top priority of every member of the ISU community. **If you are sick, stay home!**

When you cough or sneeze, always cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or use the inside of your elbow. Throw used tissues in the trash. Immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, clean your hands with a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol, rubbing your hands together until they feel dry.

Self-Monitoring

If you are working at your normal work location, you must monitor yourself for symptoms every day before reporting to work. **If you have any symptoms potentially related to COVID-19, do not report to your work location.** Notify your supervisor and consult with your health care provider. If you start feeling ill or showing symptoms while at work, contact your supervisor, leave your workplace, and consult with your healthcare provider.

Currently, these symptoms include one or more of the following:

- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fever
- Chills
- Muscle pain
- Sore throat
- New loss of taste or smell
- Other less common symptoms have been reported, including gastrointestinal symptoms like nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.



If you have any of the following emergency warning signs of COVID-19, seek emergency medical care immediately:

- Trouble breathing
- Persistent chest pain or pressure
- New confusion
- Inability to stay awake
- Bluish lips or face

High Risk Employees and Members of Household

According to the CDC, certain individuals may have a higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19. These include older adults (65 years of age or older) and those individuals with the following medical conditions:

- Chronic lung disease
- Moderate to severe asthma
- Serious heart conditions
- Compromised immune system
- Severe obesity
- Diabetes
- Chronic kidney disease being treated with dialysis
- Liver disease

Your health is a top priority. If you have concerns about performing work at your normal location due to a medical condition that places you or someone in your household in a high-risk group, consult with your health care provider. Contact Andrea Little with Employee & Labor Relations, University Human Resources at alittle@iastate.edu to discuss the options available to you in your circumstance.

Phased Return

ISU will increase operations in multiple phases over the summer, with an increasing number of employees returning to their normal work locations in each phase. The intent of this approach is to pace the return, allowing us to assess safety and operational effectiveness at each stage. While our new normal will look different, we are working toward a return to functioning as a residential campus in the fall.

Each department will assess its staffing needs based on its operations, the ability to manage its work environments, and its employees' need to access on-campus resources. Guidance about future phases will be issued at a later time.

The need to protect against the risk of infection from COVID-19 will continue for some time. A resurgence of COVID-19 in Iowa, or locally in Story County, may require enhanced protective measures. The ISU Emergency Operations Center will remain active throughout the summer and fall to monitor the situation and to coordinate ISU's response with local and state partners.

Current Staffing Options

Supervisors should consider the following options to support worker protection during current operations and the first phase of return. These options are intended to enhance physical distancing between persons on campus and to reduce the population density of buildings and work areas.

Remote Work	Employees who can fulfill most or all their work responsibilities by working remotely should continue to do so to reduce the number of persons in a workspace.
Alternating Workdays	Where appropriate, departments should schedule partial staffing on alternate days.

Staggered Arrival/Departure	The beginning and end of the workday typically bring many people together at buildings' entrances and exits. Staggering reporting and departure times by at least 30 minutes will reduce traffic in common areas.
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Health and Safety Guidance

COVID-19 will remain a public health concern for some time. The following guidelines will help protect the campus community by reducing transmission risks. Because it is possible for an infected person to spread COVID-19 without showing symptoms, you should follow these guidelines even if you feel perfectly healthy.

Face Coverings and Face Shields

Cloth face coverings that are homemade or commercially manufactured help contain the wearer's respiratory emissions. The [CDC recommends wearing cloth face coverings in public settings](#), particularly where physical distancing is difficult to maintain (e.g., common workspaces, meeting areas, classrooms).

Face shields protect the face area from splashes, sprays, or splatter from body fluids. The face shield should cover the forehead, extend below the chin, and wraparound the side of the face. [CDC recommends wearing a face shield to extend the life of face coverings or when no face coverings are available](#).

Beginning July 1, all faculty and staff who are able are required to wear a cloth face covering or face shield when in the presence of others where other mitigation strategies are not available or are difficult to maintain (e.g., physical distancing). For example, if you are in your own office space, cubicle, or lab and are able to remain physically distant (six feet apart) from others, you do not need to wear your cloth face covering. However, if you enter the hallway, you should wear a face covering until you return.

Prior to July 1, faculty and staff are encouraged to wear face coverings if they have them. ISU will supply two cloth face coverings for each employee who requests them. Work with your supervisor to request cloth face coverings through Central Stores.

Cloth face coverings are not substitute for medical-grade surgical masks, N95 respirators, or other personal protective equipment (PPE). Continue to preserve PPE for members of the workforce who require this level of protection for their job functions. Do not substitute cloth face coverings for required PPE in any job function.

For guidance about using your cloth face covering, consult [ISU's Tips for Cloth Face Coverings During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#).

The following table compares different types of face coverings and describes each type's intended use. Even when wearing face coverings, physical distancing should still be practiced to the greatest extent possible.

Cloth Face Covering		Members of the Iowa State community who are able are expected to wear a non-medical, cloth face covering. Cultural norms, medical conditions, personal preferences, etc. may factor into the decision to wear a face covering versus a face shield. Wearing a mask or face cover is not a signal they are sick or infectious.
Medical/Surgical Face Masks		<p>Medical/surgical face masks should be reserved for healthcare staff and patients. These masks are meant to protect the people around you from inadvertent exposure to your respiratory droplets.</p> <p>Some healthcare facilities, including Thielen Student Health Center, require that all staff and patients use medical/surgical face masks when on the premises. Doing so helps ensure that people who do not realize they are infected do not spread the infection to others when in the proximity of a healthcare interaction.</p>
N95 Respirator		Respirator masks, such as N95 masks, are reserved for situations that pose a risk for high concentration of infected respiratory droplets. N95 masks and other respirators are in extremely short supply and must be reserved for the people who need it the most: healthcare and public safety workers who are on the front lines.
Face Shield		Face shields come in various forms, but all provide a clear plastic barrier that covers the face. For optimal protection, the shield should extend below the chin anteriorly, to the ears laterally, and there should be no exposed gap between the forehead and the shield's headpiece.

Physical Distancing

Keeping space between yourself and others reduces potential exposure. Whenever possible, remain at least six feet from others.

Do not gather in groups. Hold meetings virtually rather than in person. Remain mindful of Iowa Department of Public Health restrictions on the size of gatherings.

Communicate via email, telephone, and collaboration software (e.g., WebEx, Zoom, Microsoft Teams) to reduce the need for in-person conversations.

Use cloth face coverings when 6-foot physical distance is not possible to maintain. Work as quickly as possible while remaining safe. Do not involve co-workers or observers who are not necessary for the task at hand.

Utilize workspaces to increase distance between employees and clients.

In areas that normally host large groups or lines, add barriers or other measures for reducing occupancy. In customer service areas where lines are unavoidable, place floor markings for spacing and clear barriers for airborne droplet protection.

Where architecture allows, place one-way directional signage to control movement. Designate specific stairways for up and down traffic.

Handwashing and Hand Sanitizer

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after spending time in a public place, blowing your nose, coughing, sneezing, or touching your face.

If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until dry. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.



Clean and Healthy Workplace

Custodial crews will continue to perform regular cleaning. As more employees return to their normal work locations, it will take a community effort to keep workspaces clean. All ISU employees have shared responsibility to keep their personal work areas and the common areas of their workplaces clean and safe.

[Clean and disinfect](#) your personal work area, including lab areas and computer equipment, regularly.

Clean and disinfect common space or shared equipment regularly. Pay special attention to controls and frequently touched surfaces (e.g., printer or copier touchscreens, A/V and other electrical equipment, desks, tables, light switches, door handles).

Appropriate cleaning products, approved for workplace use by Environmental Health and Safety, are available through ISU Central Stores. Consult the [CDC Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility](#) guidance for more information about cleaning.

Other Workplace Topics

Offices and Work Areas

If you work in an open environment, maintain physical distancing. If possible, leave an open workspace between yourself and each other co-worker. While in shared work areas, wear cloth face coverings when physical distancing is impractical. If you are in your own office space or cubicle and able to physically distance, you do not need to wear your cloth face covering.

If you work in an office, avoid situations that would place more than one person in the same small room (e.g., conference, break, copy or mail room) without the possibility of physical distancing. If more than one person must use a room, each person should wear a cloth face covering.

Each department should assess its work environments, meeting areas, and customer service areas for ways to promote physical distancing. See this document's Physical Distancing section for options to consider.

Restrooms

Limit restroom use based on the size of the restroom to maintain physical distancing whenever possible.

Wash your hands thoroughly after using the restroom. When leaving the restroom, open the door with a paper towel or tissue.

Research Laboratories, Facilities and Field/Farm Work

The ISU research community has developed specific guidance for persons working in laboratory environments, performing research work in field and farm settings, or conducting human subjects research.

All research leads, regardless of setting or current campus footprint, should use the [Supervisor Workspace Plan](#) for managing your research teams and activities.

The completed Supervisor Workspace Plan must be shared and discussed with the supervisor (department chair, VPR center director). Research leads who are already working in campus laboratories and facilities or who plan to have additional research group members working on campus should assess the research spaces used by team members for risks, and ensure that the team members have adequate supplies (PPE, disinfectants) for a safe working environment.

Field and farm research leads should consult travel and field safety guidance developed for working in field and farm settings and with private farms.

Face-to-face human subjects research is not permitted at this time. Please refer to the document titled [Face-to-Face Human Subjects Research Activities Restricted](#) for the most current guidance.

Meals

Before and after eating, wash your hands.

In campus dining facilities, wear your cloth face covering until you are ready to eat. Maintain physical distancing while in line. If it is reasonable for your work situation, get your meal to go and eat in your office or outside.

While eating, maintain physical distancing. Don't sit facing others. When you are done eating, put your cloth face covering back on.

Departments should consider reduced capacity limits in common areas to support physical distancing. Frequently clean and disinfect all surfaces in common areas, including tables, refrigerator handles, microwaves, coffee machines, sinks, and vending machine buttons. Departments should not organize potlucks or share food that isn't in individually wrapped portions.

Elevators

Leave elevators open for Cyclones with mobility needs or those who are moving heavy packages or equipment. Whenever possible, take the stairs (which also helps your Adventure2 step goals).

Elevator use should be limited to one person at a time if possible. If more than one person needs to use the elevator, users are expected to wear cloth face coverings. Upon exiting the elevator, wash your hands as soon as possible

CyRide

ISU's partners at CyRide have been working to protect their employees and passengers throughout the pandemic. Walk when practical; it will reduce possible exposure and helps your Adventure2 step goals. If you use CyRide, follow the driver's instructions. Put on a cloth face covering before boarding the bus. Avoid touching surfaces with your hands. Upon exiting the bus, wash your hands as soon as possible, and before removing your cloth face covering.

Shared Vehicles

Minimize trips that require more than one person in a vehicle. If this is unavoidable, everyone in the vehicle should wear a cloth face covering.

Cyclone Wellness

The Cyclone community has shown incredible strength and resilience as we've worked together to adapt to new and unpredictable ways of working, teaching, and living. As we all continue to establish new routines within our jobs and families, please know that the ISU leadership team and departments across campus are here to support you. The following online resources are available to assist in your wellbeing.

[Iowa State University Human Resources](#)

Important information and support resources for faculty and staff.

[Iowa State University COVID-19 Response](#)

Iowa State University's website for campus updates and information. In addition, there is a tab that highlights impactful news and stories about ISU's work in response to the pandemic.

[ISU Wellbeing](#)

Resources specific to employees and their families for self-care and wellbeing during these challenging times including information on the Employee Assistance Program.

[Iowa State University Extension & Outreach](#)

Resources that provide information to help you cope with concerns about healthy eating, relationships, mental health and wellbeing, personal finance, food safety, nutrition and wellness.

[CycloneHealth.org](#)

Listing of resources and strategies from the Student Health and Wellness Departments.

[Diversity, Equity and Inclusion COVID-19](#)

Listing of resources and strategies from the campus Diversity and Inclusion Office.

[Keep Community. Stay Informed. Be Well.](#)

Resources and strategies for students and employees.

[Iowa Healthiest State Initiative](#)

The COVID-19 pandemic may be causing you new or additional stress and anxiety. Linked here are resources to help you cope.

Resources

Internal Resources

[Iowa State University COVID-19 Response](#)

Iowa State University's website for campus updates and information. In addition, there is a tab that highlights impactful news and stories about ISU's innovative work in response to the pandemic.

[Caring for Self and Others When Sick with COVID-19 Flyer](#)

Information from Thielen Student Health and University Human Resources providing guidance to employees for COVID-19 care and returning to work.

External Resources

[COVID-19 in Iowa](#)

The official site for information, maps, and resources about the coronavirus response in the state of Iowa.

[Iowa Department of Public Health \(IDPH\)](#)

Website for various health issues and resources for those residing in Iowa.

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)

United States federal website for COVID-19.

[World Health Organization COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

The official website for all information from the World Health Organization on the coronavirus pandemic.

ISU Fact Sheets and Signage

Cloth Face Coverings

[Tips for Cloth Face Coverings Fact Sheet](#)

Provides tips for wearing, caring for, and laundering your cloth face covering.

[Tips for Cloth Face Coverings Video](#)

A short video highlighting the use of cloth face coverings.

Cleaning and Disinfection

[Cleaning and Disinfection Procedures for COVID-19 \(Laboratory Settings\)](#)

Provides cleaning and disinfecting guidelines for laboratory settings.

Hand Hygiene

[Stop Germs! Wash Your Hands](#)

A poster promoting hand washing which can be printed and placed in buildings.

Research Guidance

[Laboratory Ramp-Up Checklist](#)

This document provides those working in a laboratory a checklist to follow prior to starting research again on campus.

[Safe Distancing Guidelines for ISU Laboratories](#)

Provides guidelines for safe distancing practices while working in a laboratory.

[Safe Distancing Guidelines for ISU Laboratories \(poster\)](#)

A poster that can be placed in a laboratory to explain physical distancing while working in a laboratory setting.