

Essential Staff Operations Planning & Procedures During Pandemic

These suggested protocols can help institutions maintain essential functions in the face of a massive workforce reduction of prolonged duration. These horticultural best practices will sustain living collections and plants in production while limiting risks to essential personnel and their families:

Personnel Management and Communications

- Communicate that health and safety of employees is top priority.
- Stress “stay home if you feel sick to protect others” and immediately identify essential staff who self-identify as needing to self-quarantine and replace with suitable alternative.
- Make it clear to essential staff they can make their personal choice about coming in to work, and choose to use sick, vacation, and unpaid leave.
- Communicate symptoms of contracting pandemic. Require employees with symptoms, or those who have been in contact with confirmed cases, to stay home for 14 days.
- Give employees time for R&R to stay positive and not feel overloaded during difficult times.
- Implement daily communications to reinforce best practices, keep staff apprised of changes and anticipated next steps, and to maintain morale. Maintain adequate communication between onsite staff and those working remotely to ensure continuity in decision-making.
- Designate one point-person essential personnel as on-site contact when needed by outside entities.
- Prepare schedule and assign staff to locations. Stagger shifts to minimize contact. Maintain list of on-call individuals for emergencies or to step in if assigned individuals become sick.
- Ensure personnel carry an official letter designating them as essential staff, particularly when traveling to/from the site, if required by local authorities.
- Establish routine safety check-in schedule for onsite essential staff throughout the work period, especially those working solo.
- Provide clear direction for any staff assisting assigned lead in each area. Try to pair them with someone they’re used to working with to help foster collaboration and confidence.

Operations and Horticultural Maintenance

- Define what constitutes the "minimum degree of care" to preserve collections at your site and inform staff.
- Limit one individual per vehicle or golf cart. Wipe down steering wheel, gear shift, door handles, etc. at start and end of their shift. If practical, walk between locations instead.
- Minimize use of shared equipment and tools. For any shared equipment, disinfect handles of tools and mowers used at the start and end of each shift.
- Wear gloves as much as possible, removing only to eat or drink.
- Check greenhouse temperatures/vents/doors/alarm systems regularly. Post all day/night crop temperature and schedule settings in each area

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- Ensure irrigation system is working properly. Automate watering as much as possible without compromising plant health. Wear gloves while using hoses.
- Continue integrated pest management scouting and treatments.
- Limit use of common areas like kitchen, break room, bathrooms. Shorten work hours or close common areas periodically during day to allow time for disinfecting hard surfaces.
- Enforce rule restricting non-essential staff from offices/ property to protect essential staff.

Overarching Principles:

- ❖ Be honest. Be kind.
- ❖ Expect things to be different. Expect things to change.
- ❖ Leaders lead. Step up if you can.
- ❖ Stay in solution-mode with staff (and labor union if applicable).

The Association acknowledges the following individuals and organizations who contributed to these best practices in March 2020:

Meagan Hanna, Montreal Botanical Garden

Brendan Huggins, Bok Tower Gardens

Joe Rothleutner, Santa Barbara Botanic Garden

Ian Simpkins, Vizcaya Museum and Gardens

Cindy Baker & Fred Spicer, Chicago Botanic Garden

Michael Dosmann, Arnold Arboretum

Cindy Brown, Smithsonian Gardens

Pennsylvania Nursery & Landscape Association

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