Forest Service **Washington Office** **1400 Independence Avenue, SW**
Washington, D.C. 20250

File Code: 6100 **Date:** July 2, 2020
Route To:

Subject: Guidance on COVID-19 Testing and Subsequent Action

To: Regional Foresters, Station Director, IITF Director, Deputy Chiefs and WO Directors

I extend my thanks to each of you for your contributions and commitment to live our value of Service to the American people during this unprecedented pandemic. This letter serves to document the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service's guidance and policy regarding COVID-19 testing and providing alternate housing, until we can provide further direction. This includes follow up actions that may be necessary after a test occurs. We want to ensure we continue to equally live our value of Safety and focus on our foremost priority, keeping our employees safe,

You work each day to provide customer service to the public at our recreation sites; deliver our conservation mission through active management; and perform essential activities like timber sales, wildland firefighting and law enforcement. As part of our commitment to maintain safe workplace conditions during this pandemic, we are putting into place many changes to maintain proper social distancing; provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE); and make certain there are ample supplies of hand sanitizer and more robust cleaning schedules. When it comes to our increasing needs for COVID-19 testing and alternate housing, we ask you to please follow the subsequent guidance:

COVID-19 Testing:

1. Any employee who is required to be at a Forest Service duty station, is in travel status, or on a Forest Service work assignment such as a fire incident or other remote assignment may be required to be tested. Our mission requires that we ensure we have enough personnel to carry out our functions.
2. Instances where an employee will be required to be tested are when any employee is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms while performing their duties or when any employee has had direct exposure while performing their work assignments to an individual who tests positive for COVID-19.
3. During an assignment, daily symptom screening for COVID-19 will be performed. COVID-19 symptoms are found at https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html.
4. To obtain tests, employees will leverage local testing capacity as available. If free testing is not available, employees will work with their local line officers or incident management teams to pay for testing at time of service. If this is not feasible, then employees will use

Form FS-6500-229 to seek reimbursement for expenses not covered by the employee's insurance, regardless of the final diagnosis.

5. While using state or local testing capacity is the primary and preferred option, in instances where Regional Foresters, Station Directors, IITF Director, or Deputy Chiefs determine mission requirements necessitate additional testing capacity, they must work with Business Operations to facilitate the ability to contract for testing services to be administered at no cost to the employee if feasible. Contracting additional testing capabilities will require 1) test supplies, which could vary in market availability; 2) credible lab analysis; 3) a certified medical professional to interpret lab analysis; 4) data management, including protection of privacy; and 5) test disposal management.

Alternative Work Location or Alternative Housing Locations:

1. If an employee is awaiting required test results; is required to be quarantined after receiving required test results based upon local government guidelines; or tests positive as a result of their mission assignments, the employee should attempt to self-isolate at their residence. If this is not feasible due to the inability to comply with Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines or due to exposure of those with significant risk factors in the home, the Forest Service will offer and pay for alternative housing or an alternative work location in accordance with State and local health official guidance for up to 14 days.
2. For employees who are not in travel duty status and are unable to self-isolate at their residence, local line officers may provide alternative housing or alternative work location in accordance with State and local health official guidance using GSA's Emergency Lodging Services program for quarantining purposes.
3. Employees in travel duty status will coordinate with their supervisor to either extend their travel authorization to use hotels in accordance with State and local health official guidance, or to use other approved lodging provided by the Forest Service, such as lodging acquired via the Emergency Lodging Service. This may be at the travel duty location, a location in route to or from a travel duty location, or at their normal duty location. In addition, in accordance with State and local health official guidance, the Forest Service will work with the affected employee to assist with travel back to their residence as soon as practicable. No employee shall report to work duty station if presumed or confirmed positive with COVID-19.

Duty Status while in Alternate Housing or Alternative Work Locations:

1. If an employee is able to perform work at the alternative work location while they are symptomatic, during a required quarantine period, in isolation, or while they await test results, they will be paid their standard salary. If during the required isolation or quarantine period or while awaiting test results from a required test, an employee is unable to perform remote work, they may take Weather and Safety leave.
2. If the employee is symptomatic, the employee may take emergency sick leave as provided by the CARES Act for up to 80 hours, take accrued sick leave, or take other leave in lieu of sick leave.

This is a constantly changing situation. This guidance is aligned with current CDC guidelines and best practices as recommended by medical advisors. We recognize this fluid situation may change, and we will update this guidance and direction if it becomes necessary to do so. We remain committed to protecting the health and safety of our employees and the American people we serve. We will continue to base our actions on the guidance provided by the CDC to ensure we can perform all of our essential mission functions as safely as possible. Thank you for all you do.

X Victoria Christiansen

For

Signed by: KATHERINE ARMSTRONG

VICTORIA CHRISTIANSEN
Chief