

Beydler, Van

Subject: COVID-19 Updates 3-23-2020

From: Plassmeyer, Jim <jim.plassmeyer@dnr.mo.gov>

Sent: Tuesday, March 24, 2020 8:37 AM

To: Ball, Kenneth <Kenneth.Ball@swcd.mo.gov>; DNR.Soil and Water Conservation Districts staff <dnr.soilandwaterconservationdistrictsstaff@dnr.mo.gov>

Cc: DNR.SWC Staff <dnr.swcstaff@dnr.mo.gov>; 'ryan.brittfarms@gmail.com' <ryan.brittfarms@gmail.com>

Subject: RE: COVID-19 Updates 3-23-2020

We checked with ITSD. ITSD said it was NRCS equipment and was their decision on how it is used. ITSD doesn't have an issue with the card reader being used at home then brought back and used on the state computers. They did say if staff would have to work with NRCS if you have issues with it at home.

We recommend that the boards look at every option available to keep employees working. The board has the right to grant employees administrative leave if they think there is justification for granting it.

Jim Plassmeyer
Soil & Water Conservation Program
District Assistance Section
Phone 573-751-1741

We'd like your feedback on the service you received from the Missouri Department of Natural Resources. Please consider taking a few minutes to complete the department's Customer Satisfaction Survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MoDNRsurvey>. Thank you.

From: Ball, Kenneth <Kenneth.Ball@swcd.mo.gov>

Sent: Monday, March 23, 2020 3:22 PM

To: Plassmeyer, Jim <jim.plassmeyer@dnr.mo.gov>; DNR.Soil and Water Conservation Districts staff <dnr.soilandwaterconservationdistrictsstaff@dnr.mo.gov>

Cc: DNR.SWC Staff <dnr.swcstaff@dnr.mo.gov>

Subject: RE: COVID-19 Updates 3-23-2020

So a question still somewhat remains. Reading this , has it been ok'd and clarified by State IT to do what NRCS staff has said to do in regards to using Citrix at home on our personal computers /ipads then returning to work and again using them on state computers?

Secondly... so if the board /staff decides it is unsafe or too high risk to remain in the office and the board grants them Admin. Leave those employees will receive that benefit even if they do not use their accrued leave prior.?

Kenneth Ball
Area 6 Employee Rep.
Dade County.

From: Plassmeyer, Jim <jim.plassmeyer@dnr.mo.gov>

Sent: Monday, March 23, 2020 3:02 PM

To: DNR.Soil and Water Conservation Districts staff <dnr.soilandwaterconservationdistrictsstaff@dnr.mo.gov>

Cc: DNR.SWC Staff <dnr.swcstaff@dnr.mo.gov>

Subject: COVID-19 Updates 3-23-2020

Good afternoon board members and staff,

Our staff know this is a very stressful time for everyone and things are changing at a fast pace. We are trying to provide accurate communication to districts in a timely manner. We have been communicating with the NRCS state office so each of the partners are aware of what is happening from both sides.

The program was notified by the NRCS state office that due to the COVID-19 National Emergency, NRCS activated the agency Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP). In doing so, all USDA offices and service centers, effective Monday, March 23rd, 2020, will operate at a Level II status through April 3, 2020. This means that offices will be closed to the public with updated signage directing customers to contact the staff via telephone for assistance.

Here are key points that we received from NRCS state office on what changes will be effective Monday:

- The agency continues to remain operational with maximum telework flexibility. They are not permitted to close offices without approval from the national level.
- Service Center staffing is limited to one NRCS employee per office. Under this scenario, a second NRCS employee may enter the office to retrieve items required for a field visit, however, social distancing practices must be followed in these situations.
- No customers or visitors are permitted in NRCS office space at this time. They will be doing phone appointments only, and not be conducting face to face visits in the office or in the field.
- **Conservation District and other Partner staff are not subject to the COOP. Partner staff may continue working in the Service Center after Monday as long as social distancing and other preventative measures are followed.**
- Field visits are allowable based on approval from supervisors and as long as social distancing recommendations are followed. Only one employee may travel in a vehicle to conduct official business at a time.

A NRCS staff needs to be present in the office for partner staff to be in the office. The district board may wish to establish a work schedule to rotate SWCD staff working in the office to minimize the number of people in the office at a time, but all SWCD employees can work in the office at the same time if they adhere to social distancing. If district staff is working in the office and limited federal staff are present, district staff may need to help with answering phone calls.

There are still options for employees to work outside of the office such as doing field visits for planning or spot checks on practices. NRCS has provided guidance for their staff to follow when doing field visits. SWCD staff should follow these same guideline. Consideration should also be given to staff using the same equipment so that there is not any cross contamination between staff. This may also be a good time to get caught up on any AgLearn trainings or updating employee training plans (<https://www.eauth.usda.gov/eauth/b/usda/login>) or the state cyber security trainings (<https://awareness.cybersecurity.mo.gov/login>) which both can be accessed from your home computer.

District State Email

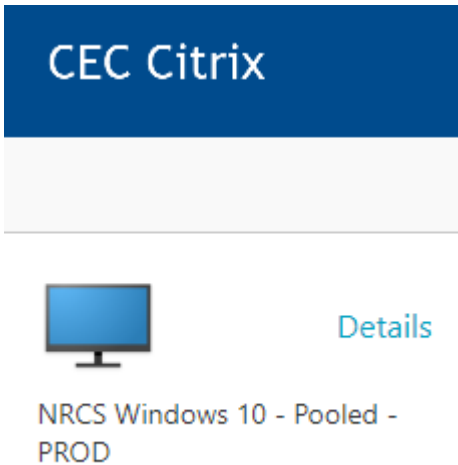
District employees can access their state email account by webmail <https://webmail.mo.gov/>. The link takes the user to the sign in page. The login is the same as logging onto the state computer except you have to include the domain with your user ID. The domain for all districts is ADS. The log in will be ADS\nr???? and the password you use to log onto the state computer.

CITRIX

If district staff work from home, staff that use Citrix to access the NRCS network with their state computer can use that on a personal computer as well. Here are directions provided by NRCS on how to use it at home:

- User will need to take card reader home and attach to their home computer.
- Go to this site: <http://workspace.usda.gov/>.
- User will be prompted to Download and install the Citrix Receiver and must have Administrative rights to install the software.
- After installation, go to the same site: <http://workspace.usda.gov/>

To gain access to the following workstation.



Board Meetings

District board meetings cannot be held in the USDA Service Center. If the board needs to conduct a meeting but does not want to hold it in person, the sunshine law does allow for meetings to be conducted by telecommunication. Here is the statement from the law “whether such meeting is conducted in person or by means of communication equipment, including, but not limited to conference call, video conference, internet chat, or internet message board.” Whatever means the board decides to use to conduct their meeting, the board has to remember that the public must have the option to participate as well. Please remember the sunshine law requires that meetings be posted 24 hours prior to the meeting and the agenda needs to include if it will be conducted by telephone or other electronic means. The law also states that if for a good cause it is impossible or impractical to post a notice 24 hours prior to the meeting, a notice needs to be made to the public as soon as possible. NRCS may be able to provide a conference line for the board to use. Districts need to work with the District Conservationist to find out availability.

Office Closure

This morning, Governor Parson announced effective Tuesday, March 24, 2020 until 12:01 A.M. Monday, April 6, 2020 all state buildings will be closed to public access and limited state employee access. Where possible, state employees will be working remotely and if they cannot work remotely will be allowed to use administrative leave. The program will have limited staff in the office with the remainder working from home. All of the coordinators will still be available to answer questions, attend board meetings via electronic means and review contracts. Staff will also continue to process contract payments.

The Office of Administration adjusted the leave guidance for state employees if an office is closed due to a positive COVID-19 test causing the building to be cleaned and disinfected. State employees impacted by the closure may be relocated to other buildings, instructed to work remotely if it is an option or may be excused from work pending further instructions. If an employee is excused, they will be granted administrative leave.

There are six USDA offices that are closed now. As USDA offices close, the board needs to decide what they expect their employees to do or what leave to utilize. There are options as outlined above about still performing district business outside of the office. There have been questions if a board puts employees on administrative leave if that will be eligible for state funds. The board needs to make sure they have exhausted all work or leave options before they place employees on administrative leave. If the board does put employees on administrative leave, they need to establish how long the leave is granted, if the employees need to report in occasionally and why they are putting the employees on administrative leave. If paid administrative leave is the last option for the board to provide to the employee, administrative leave is an eligible expense from state funds.

If a USDA office is closed, the district needs to ensure that they get critical items out of the office that will be needed to keep the district operating such as the checkbook or any other documentation that is needed for paying bills or making payroll.

For the SWCD offices that are not in a USDA building, it is the decision of the SWCD board on whether the office should be closed during this time.

There are some locations in the state where local officials are limiting travel. The board needs to determine if the travel ban is impacting the employees to get to work. If an employee can't work from the office and working remotely is not an option, the board can make the decision if the employee should be placed on administrative leave.

Any of the decisions on the work schedule or leave usage for the district staff is the responsibility of the board members. Please remember when making decisions on handling work and leave and even though we are working well out of the normal range, we are still trying to operate the cost-share program and have landowners who are going to be expecting payments in the near future.

As we get any further guidance from the Office of Administration that may be applicable to districts, we will let the districts know. There has been some action taken on bills at the federal level but we do not know what impact that has to the districts.

We appreciate your continued patience with receiving updates during this crisis. If you have questions please contact your district coordinator. Thank you.

Soil and Water Conservation Program

Colleen Meredith

We'd like your feedback on the service you received from the Missouri Department of Natural Resources. Please consider taking a few minutes to complete the department's Customer Satisfaction Survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MoDNRsurvey>. Thank you.