



COVID-Safe Highway Operations

Office of Maintenance Overview

Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, CTDOT has remained open and operational. We are essential to ensuring that the motoring public can travel safely throughout the State of Connecticut. As more parts of the state safely “reopen,” there is an ever-increasing demand for maintenance and essential work related to Connecticut’s roadways. The Bureau of Highway Operations, Office of Maintenance, is committed to creating as COVID-safe a work environment as possible to ensure that as a team, we safeguard the health and safety of each other and we do our part to fully support the traveling public as the state reopens.

Necessary CTDOT COVID Actions To-Date

The COVID-19 pandemic has created high levels of concern and unpredictability. Although there is no single policy or proposed response to alleviate all concerns or risks related to COVID-19, there are measures CTDOT should take to the greatest extent possible to minimize exposures to our people and the public. Over the past few months, Highway Operations has taken the following measures:

- **Staffing:** In order to mitigate the increased concerns and immediate risks of COVID-19—which was anticipated to peak in April/May—Highway Operations moved its Maintenance crews to a 50/50 schedule on March 31, 2020. Reduced staffing during COVID-19’s peak not only helped reduce risk exposures in the workplace, it also allowed CTDOT to properly plan for and to acquire high-demand items (PPE and cleaning supplies) necessary to sustain full operations.
- **PPE & Cleanings:** In early April, weeks ahead of the state mandate for face covering, CTDOT acquired and disseminated cloth masks for Highway Maintenance employees (in addition to surgical masks, which are not optimal for all work environments and now gaiter mask which create greater flexibility for field operations.) In addition to disinfecting and cleaning guidance issued in March, a cleaning company was engaged (in April) to perform additional cleaning at all Highway Operations facilities as a preventative measure to supplement routine disinfecting and sanitizing of high touch and common areas at our facilities.
- **CTDOT COVID Steering Committee – Satellite Office Work Group:** In April, CTDOT launched a COVID Steering Committee to identify ways the agency can improve and sustain a healthy and safe work environment for all employees. The Committee included a Satellite Office Work Group dedicated to identifying ways to minimize COVID exposures in district headquarters, field offices, and maintenance facilities. In June, the Work Group outlined their [framework](#) for providing a COVID-safe work environment.
- **Employee Feedback – Health & Safety Survey:** In May, CTDOT sought anonymous employee feedback on health & safety concerns related to COVID-19 over a two-week period. Of the 1765 employee responses, 807 (46% of survey responses) self-identified as members of the Highway Operations Bureau—including 626 paper survey responses. Highway Operations employees expressed the most concern for COVID exposures in general use areas (entrances, breakrooms, bathrooms) and in shared vehicles. Highway Operations employees expressed an overwhelming willingness to wear masks (88%) and in the cases where wearing a mask is a challenge, the top reasons were related to health/medical, breathing, heat or visibility. They also overwhelmingly expressed a willingness to do their part and clean their personal work areas/common work areas (93%).

Reopen Connecticut: Reconstituting CTDOT Maintenance Staff Levels

As many of Connecticut's sectors are safely reopening under "Phase 2" (June 17, 2020) as part of Reopen Connecticut, CTDOT will be ending 50/50 staffing levels and **restoring full staffing capacity under COVID-safe work practices for essential highway maintenance employees and direct support staff on Monday June 22, 2020**.

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As an ever-changing public health emergency, CTDOT's success in mitigating as many COVID-19 risks as possible depends on many factors, including the ability to adapt and respond to updated Federal and State health and safety guidelines as they become available. A number of measures are being taken to restore Maintenance workforce levels to full capacity in a COVID-safe work environment, including:

- **Training** – all employees will be briefed on COVID-safe work practices and the location of the COVID-19 Response Book.
- **COVID-19 Response Book** – a complete guidebook binder to COVID-safe directives, guidance, policy and procedures, including paid leave information, will be at all facilities. The one-stop-shop binder will include a daily facility/equipment cleaning checklist and log sheet.
- **Supplies & Inventory** – the Bureau has identified, procured and distributed necessary PPE and cleaning supplies to all facilities. A minimum and maximum inventory level has been identified for each product so resupply can be accomplished in a timely manner.
- **Notices** – "social distancing", "wear a mask" and COVID-19 symptom posters have been posted in common areas, bathrooms, front doors, and bulletin boards at all facilities.
- **Meetings** – training, tailgate talks, and meetings will be held in open garage bays to provide for social distancing and air circulation.
- **Ongoing Communications** – updates will continue to be provided to employees, including Safety Bulletins, Directives, Memorandums, the Commissioner's Weekly message and appropriate notifications and contact-tracing related to firsthand and secondhand potential exposures to COVID-positive employees.

Employees will be trained, equipped, and responsible for creating and maintaining as COVID-safe a work environment as possible. Every employee is advised to self-health screen before reporting to work and to take care of their PPE and supplies.

Creating a COVID-safe work environment requires everyone. CTDOT cannot do it alone. This Department has a responsibility to our employees and *every employee has a responsibility* to each other in helping promote a COVID safe workplace. We are in this together.