



# **Pandemic Operations**

## Policies and Procedures

**Forward:**

Although the following policies and procedures were developed in response to the current COVID-19 pandemic, the same or similar policies and procedures may apply to other pandemics or public health emergencies as they arise. The Virginia Department of Fire Programs (VDFP) will continue to serve stakeholders while altering procedures to protect staff and students and reduce virus spread to the greatest extent plausible.

VDFP will follow orders and directions given by the Governor and the Executive Director of Fire Programs. Furthermore, VDFP will stay up to date on pandemic guidance and best practices provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) and the United States Department of Labor Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), and follow such guidance. Guidance from these regulatory agencies may change and we will adapt these and other policies to any changes in guidance or other best practices to address the safety of all participants in our training programs. These policies/procedures will apply to all funded, non-funded, reimbursable, and partially funded programs.

**Health Screening Prior to Admittance**

Students and instructors will self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19. This should be completed each morning, prior to reporting for class, as well as continuously during class sessions. If any student or instructor determines they have one or more symptoms, they should not report to class.

**Daily Screening Procedures**

Students and instructors will monitor themselves for symptoms of COVID-19, prior to reporting for class each day. Individuals should ask themselves: "YES or NO since my last day of work or class, have I had any of the following:"

- Fever (100.4°F or higher) or a sense of having a fever?
- Cough that cannot be attributed to another health condition?
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing that cannot be attributed to another health condition?
- Chills that cannot be attributed to another health condition?
- Sore throat that cannot be attributed to another health condition?

- Muscle aches (myalgia) that cannot be attributed to another health condition or specific activity (such as physical exercise or a training evolution)?
- Loss of taste or smell?
- Close contact (within 6 feet) with someone in the past 14 days with suspected or confirmed COVID-19?

**If the answer is “yes” to any of the preceding questions, the individual should not report to class.**

Any student denied entry, or who experiences a self-identified symptom should report to their sponsoring organization or agency for further evaluation.

### **Taking Attendance**

The instructor shall conduct roll call verbally. At no time should a roster or writing utensil be passed throughout the classroom.

### **Social Distancing**

Social distancing is widely recognized as an effective means of reducing the transmission of viruses and infectious diseases. VDFP recognizes this practice, while also acknowledging that certain VDFP classes must have close contact between students and instructors. It is the policy of VDFP to institute social distancing in classroom and field settings, whenever possible.

### **Social Distancing Procedures**

At all times while seated in a classroom setting, students and instructors will maintain a minimum distance of 6 feet between one another.

Any instructor or student presenting to or addressing the entire class, without a microphone, will maintain a minimum distance of 10 feet from the nearest occupant, when feasible.

Instructors are strongly discouraged from moving about the classroom while instructing, and should make an effort to remain at the front of the room, a minimum of 10 feet from the nearest occupant.

Students and instructors will maintain 6 feet of distance between one another while moving about the classroom or other indoor setting, to include while entering and exiting the facility.

Students and instructors will maintain 6 feet of distance from one another while in outdoor training settings. It is recognized that some evolutions and training situations do not allow for this distancing. In such cases face covering shall be worn.

Students and instructors shall follow all VDH/ CDC social distancing recommendations during periods in between class sessions, including guidance for social gatherings and exercise facilities.

### **Use of Face Coverings**

All students and instructors shall have face coverings on their person at all times while at the training location. Face covering shall be utilized outdoors in instances when proper social distancing is not possible and in any indoor area where two or more people are present.

Face coverings and social distancing are not mutually exclusive. Face coverings are permitted to be used voluntarily at any time while at a VDFP class.

Face coverings shall be used any time six feet of physical distance between individuals cannot be maintained. This includes times of briefly breaching the six foot perimeter, such as crossing paths while walking. Face coverings shall also be worn during physically demanding training evolutions that require close proximity of individuals.

If an individual has trouble breathing or shortness of breath, a face covering should **not** be utilized.

### **Actions by Students and Instructors Experiencing Symptoms of COVID-19**

All students must notify the lead instructor as soon as possible upon symptom onset.

All instructors must notify the appropriate Division Chief immediately upon symptom onset.

### **Procedures for Students and Employees Experiencing Symptoms of COVID-19**

Symptoms of COVID-19 Include: fever, cough, shortness of breath, chills, muscle pain, fatigue, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell, congestion or runny nose, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. VDFP recognizes that some symptoms, such as muscle pain and fatigue, may be normal effects felt from high intensity training. Furthermore, symptoms may be attributed to another health condition. Individuals should use their best judgement in determining if they are truly experiencing a symptom.

If onset or any symptom occurs while class is not in session, the individual should **not** report to class or make any notification in person. Notification should be made via telephone. If onset occurs while class is in session, the individual should don their face covering and make every attempt to keep significant distance from others. The lead instructor should be notified, while keeping significant distances apart, or by telephone after leaving the classroom setting.

If an instructor experiences symptoms, the instructor shall don their face covering and leave the classroom setting, or not report to the classroom if onset is after class hours. As soon as possible, the appropriate Division Chief shall be notified via telephone. The Division Chief will ensure notification of other instructors, staff, hosts and other VDFP staff members as required.. Documentation will follow VDFP Policy for reporting injury or illness. An incident report should be completed by the VDFP Staff for any student exhibiting signs or symptoms of COVID. Face coverings will not be utilized if the symptomatic individual is experiencing difficulty in breathing or shortness of breath. In such cases, emergency medical services shall be immediately summoned. This shall take precedence over all other procedures.

Both students and instructors who report symptoms of COVID-19 while at a VDFP class should isolate themselves to the greatest extent possible. All recommendations and actions advised by local public health officials should be followed. Students should notify and follow instructions and procedures set in place by their sponsoring organization or agency. Instructors will make necessary notifications and follow current CDC/VDH guidelines regarding testing, isolation and return to work status.

### **Return to Class**

Students and instructors must be medically cleared prior to returning to any VDFP class. Students will have their organization or agency send written notice to VDFP that they are cleared for active duty. **Documentation of COVID-19 test results or testing is not required.**

### **Procedures for Approved Return to VDFP Class**

Students will have their organization or agency send written notice to the VDFP that they are cleared for active duty. The VDFP will forward documentation to the Chief Safety Officer for final approval.

Instructors will follow the current CDC/VDH guidance on returning to work, as illustrated below:

Employees/students with COVID-19 who have stayed home can stop home isolation and return to work when they have met one of the following sets of criteria:

- Option 1: If, in consultation with a healthcare provider and local public health authorities knowledgeable about locally available testing resources, it is determined **an employee/student will not have a test** to determine if they are still contagious, the employee/student can leave home and return to work after these three conditions have been met:
  - The employee/student has had no fever for at least 72 hours (that is, 3 full days of no fever without the use medicine that reduces fevers)  
AND
  - Other symptoms have improved (for example, cough or shortness of breath have improved)  
AND
  - At least 10 days have passed since their symptoms first appeared.
- Option 2: If, in consultation with a healthcare provider and local public health authorities knowledgeable about locally available testing resources, it is determined **the employee/student will be tested** to determine if the employee/student is still contagious, the employee/student can leave home after these three conditions have been met:
  - The employee/student no longer has a fever (without the use of medicine that reduces fevers)  
AND
  - other symptoms have improved (for example, cough or shortness of breath have improved)  
AND
  - they received two negative tests in a row, at least 24 hours apart. Their doctor should follow [CDC guidelines](#).

### **Visitors, Observers & Other Guests**

All VDFP classes and training sessions will limit visitors, observers and any other guests, to the greatest extent possible. Approval is required from the Division Chief prior to any of the aforementioned individuals being admitted to any VDFP class or session location. Any of these outside visitors shall follow all of the same requirements that any students and instructional staff is required to follow.

**Resources & References:**

1. [Testing Strategy for Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) in High-Density Critical Infrastructure Workplaces after a COVID-19 Case Is Identified](#)
2. [Virginia Department of Health Interim Guidance on Screening, Monitoring and Testing Employees Returning to Work: Critical Infrastructure Employees \(Non-Healthcare\)](#)
3. [COVID-19 Testing Sites](#)
4. [Symptoms of Coronavirus \(CDC\)](#)
5. [Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers Responding to Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
6. [Virginia Department of Health Interim Guidance on Screening, Monitoring and Testing Employees Returning to Work: Non-Essential Workforce](#)
7. [Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#)