

Town of Thurston Public Health Emergency Plan

1. Purpose

This plan has been developed in accordance with the amended New York State Labor Law section 27-c and New York State Education Law paragraphs k and l of subdivision 2 of section 2801-a (as amended by section 1 of part B of chapter 56 of the laws of 2016), as applicable. These laws were amended by the passing of legislation S8617B/A10832 signed by the Governor of New York State on September 7, 2020, requires public employers to adopt a plan for operations in the event of a declared public health emergency involving a communicable disease. The plan includes the identification of essential positions, facilitation of remote work for non-essential positions, provision of personal protective equipment, and protocols for supporting contact tracing.

2. Scope

This plan was developed exclusively for and is applicable to the Town of Thurston. This plan is pertinent to a declared public health emergency in the State of New York which may impact our operations; and it is in the interest of the safety of our employees and contractors, and the continuity of our operations that we have promulgated this plan.

3. Situation Overview

On March 11, 2020 the World Health Organization declared a pandemic for the novel coronavirus, which causes the COVID-19 severe acute respiratory syndrome. This plan has been developed in accordance with amended laws to support continued resilience for the continuation of the spread of this disease or for other infectious diseases, which may emerge and cause a declaration of a public health emergency.

The health and safety of our employees and contractors is crucial to maintaining our mission essential operations. We encourage all employees and contractors to use [CDC Guidance for Keeping Workplaces, Schools, Homes, and Commercial Establishments Safe](#). The fundamentals of reducing the spread of infection include:

- Using hand sanitizer and washing hands with soap and water frequently, including after using the restroom, after returning from a public outing, after touching/disposing of garbage, after using public computers, touching public tables, and countertops, etc.
- Practice social distancing when possible
- If you are feeling ill or have a fever, notify your supervisor immediately and go home
- If you start to experience coughing or sneezing, step away from people and food, cough or sneeze into the crook of your arm or a tissue, the latter of which should be disposed of immediately

- Other guidance, which may be published by the CDC, the State Department of Health, or County health officials.

4. Planning Assumptions

This plan was developed based on information, best practices, and guidance available as of the date of publication. The plan was developed to largely reflect the circumstances of the current Coronavirus pandemic but may also be applicable to other infectious disease outbreaks.

The following assumptions have been made in the development of this plan:

- The health and safety of our employees and contractors, and their families, is of utmost importance
- The circumstances of a public health emergency may directly impact our own operations.
- Impacts of a public health emergency will take time for us to respond to, with appropriate safety measures put into place and adjustments made to operations to maximize safety
- The public and our constituency expects us to maintain a level of mission essential operations
- Resource support from other jurisdictions may be limited based upon the level of impact the public health emergency has upon them
- Supply chains, particularly those for personal protective equipment (PPE) and cleaning supplies, may be heavily impacted, resulting in considerable delays in procurement
- The operations of other entities, including the private sector (vendors, contractors, etc.), non-profit organizations, and other governmental agencies and services may also be impacted due to the public health emergency, causing delays or other disruptions in their services
- Emergency measures and operational changes may need to be adjusted based upon the specific circumstances and impacts of the public health emergency, as well as guidance and direction from public health officials and the governor
- Per S8617B/A10832, 'essential employee' is defined as a public employee or contractor that is required to be physically present at a work site to perform their job
- Per S8617B/A10832, 'non-essential employee' is defined as a public employee or contractor that is not required to be physically present at a work site to perform their job

5. Concept of Operations

The Town Supervisor holds the authority to execute and direct the implementation of this plan. Implementation, monitoring of operations, and

adjustments to plan implementation may be supported by additional personnel, at the discretion of the Town Supervisor.

Upon implementation of this plan, all employees and contractors of Town of Newburgh shall be notified by in person, with details provided as possible and necessary, with additional information and updates provided on a regular basis. The Work Force will be notified of pertinent operational changes by way of Policy change publication. Other interested parties, such as vendors, will be notified by phone and/or email as necessary. The Town Supervisor or their designee of the Town of Thurston will maintain communications with the public and constituents as needed throughout the implementation of this plan.

The Town Supervisor will maintain awareness of information, direction, and guidance from public health officials and the Governor's office, directing the implementation of changes as necessary.

Upon resolution of the public health emergency, the Town Supervisor will direct the resumption of normal operations or operations with modifications as necessary.

6. *Mission Essential Functions*

When confronting events that disrupt normal operations, the Town of Thurston is committed to ensuring that essential functions will be continued even under the most challenging circumstances.

Essential functions are those functions that enable an organization to:

- a) Maintain the safety of employees, contractors, and our constituency
- b) Provide vital services
- c) Provide services required by law
- d) Sustain quality operations
- e) Uphold the core values of the Town of Thurston

The Town of Thurston has identified as critical only those priority functions that are required or are necessary to provide vital services. During activation of this plan, all other activities may be suspended to enable the organization to concentrate on providing the critical functions and building the internal capabilities necessary to increase and eventually restore operations.

Appropriate communications with employees, contractors, our constituents, and other stakeholders will be an ongoing priority.

Essential functions are prioritized according to:

- The time criticality of each essential function
- Interdependency of one function to others
- The recovery sequence of essential functions and their vital processes

Priority 1 identifies the most essential of functions, with priority 4 identifying functions that are essential, but least among them.

The mission essential functions for The Town of Thurston have been identified as:

Essential Function	Description	Priority
Dog Control officer		4
Assessors		4
Code Enforcer		2
Highway Superintendent		1
Motor Equipment Operator		4
Town Justice		1
Clerk		1
Tax Collector		1
Town Supervisor		1
Deputy Supervisor		1
Town Board		4

7. Essential Positions

Each essential function identified above requires certain positions on-site to effectively operate. The table below identifies the positions or titles that are essential to be staffed on-site for the continued operation of each essential function. Note that while some functions and associated personnel may be essential, some of these can be conducted remotely and do not need to be identified in this section.

The Town of Thurston Supervisor and Town Board maintain the authority to designate during any given pandemic or crisis which departments or employees will be deemed essential.

8. Remote Work Protocols

Non-essential employees and contractors able to accomplish their functions remotely will be enabled to do so at the greatest extent possible. Working remotely requires:

1. Identification of staff who will work remotely
2. Approval and assignment of remote work
3. Equipping staff for remote work, which may include:
 - a. Internet capable laptop
 - b. Necessary peripherals
 - c. Access to VPN and/or secure network drives
 - d. Access to software and databases necessary to perform their duties
 - e. A solution for telephone communications
 - f. Phone lines may need to be forwarded to off-site staff

Note that phone lines may need to be forwarded to off-site staff.

At the discretion of the Supervisor, line access to Town of Thurston data may be provided by use of computers, iPads or other remote access devices. The Supervisor or their designee maintains sole authority to determine which Town departments and or Contractors and Consultants will serve as Essential during times of a Pandemic or Crisis.

9. *Personal Protective Equipment*

The use of personal protective equipment (PPE) to reduce the spread of infectious disease is important to supporting the health and safety of our employees and contractors. PPE which may be needed can include:

- Masks
- Face shields
- Gloves
- Disposable gowns and aprons

Note that while cleaning supplies are not PPE, there is a related need for cleaning supplies used to sanitize surfaces, as well as hand soap and hand sanitizer. The Coronavirus pandemic demonstrated that supply chains were not able to keep up with increased demand for these products early in the pandemic. As such, we are including these supplies in this section as they are pertinent to protecting the health and safety of our employees and contractors.

Protocols for providing PPE include the following:

1. Identification of need for PPE based upon job duties and work location
2. Procurement of PPE
 - a. As specified in the amended law, public employers must be able to provide at least two pieces of each required type of PPE to each essential

- employee and contractor during any given work shift for at least six months
- b. Public employers must be able to mitigate supply chain disruptions to meet this requirement
- 3. Storage of, access to, and monitoring of PPE stock
 - a. PPE must be stored in a manner which will prevent degradation
 - b. Employees and contractors must have immediate access to PPE in the event of an emergency
 - c. The supply of PPE must be monitored to ensure integrity and to track usage rates

The Supervisor monitors weekly all quantities of required P.P.E., sanitizer, thermometers and any other required protective gear. All stock piled supplies will be maintained in the Town Hall. All requests for equipment must go through the Supervisor. It shall be the responsibility of each Department Head to ensure all employees within their department are provided with equipment. All needed supplies will be purchased in compliance with the Town of Thurston procurement guidelines.

10. Staff Exposures

Staff exposures are organized under several categories based upon the type of exposure and presence of symptoms. Following CDC guidelines, we have established the following protocols:

- a) If employees or contractors are exposed to a known case of communicable disease that is the subject of the public health emergency (defined as a 'close contact' with someone who is confirmed infected, which is a prolonged presence within six feet with that person):

Potentially exposed employees or contractors who do not have symptoms should remain at home or in a comparable setting and practice social distancing for the lesser of 14 days or other current CDC/public health guidance for the communicable disease in question. (This may change or need to be updated as CDC/NYS or Local Health Department requirements change.)

As possible, these employees will be permitted to work remotely during this period if they are not ill.

The Town Supervisor must be notified and is responsible for ensuring these protocols are followed. See the section titled Documentation of Work Hours and Locations for additional information on contact tracing.

CDC guidelines for COVID-19 provide that critically essential employees may be permitted to continue work following potential exposure, provided they remain symptom-free and additional precautions are taken to protect them, other employees and contractors, and our constituency/public.

Additional precautions will include the requirement of the subject employee or contractor, as well as others working in their proximity, to always wear appropriate PPE to limit the potential of transmission.

In-person interactions with the subject employee or contractor will be limited as much as possible.

- b) Work areas in which the subject employee or contractor are present will be disinfected according to current CDC/public health protocol at least every hour, as practical. See the section on Cleaning and Disinfection for additional information on that subject.
- c) If at any time they exhibit symptoms, refer to item B below.
- d) The Town of Thurston Supervisor or their designee shall be informed in these circumstances and who is responsible for ensuring these protocols are followed.

If an employee or contractor exhibits symptoms of the communicable disease that is the subject of the public health emergency:

- a) Employees and contractors who exhibit symptoms in the workplace should be immediately separated from other employees, customers, and visitors. They should immediately be sent home with a recommendation to contact their physician.
- b) Employees and contractors who exhibit symptoms outside of work should notify their supervisor and stay home, with a recommendation to contact their physician.
- c) Employees should not return to work until they have met the criteria to discontinue home isolation per CDC/public health guidance and have consulted with a healthcare provider.
- d) Town of Thurston will not require sick employees to provide a negative test result for the disease in question or healthcare provider's note to validate their illness, qualify for sick leave, or return to work; unless there is a recommendation from the CDC/public health officials to do so.
- e) CDC criteria for COVID-19 provides that persons exhibiting symptoms may return to work if at least 24 hours have passed since the last instance of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications. If the disease in question is other than COVID-19, CDC and other public guidance shall be referenced.
- f) The Town Supervisor or their designee must be informed in these circumstances and who is responsible for ensuring these protocols are followed.

If an employee or contractor has tested positive for the communicable disease that is the subject of the public health emergency:

- a) Apply the steps identified above, as applicable.

Areas occupied for prolonged periods of time by the subject employee or contractor will be closed off.

- a) CDC guidance for COVID-19 indicates that a period of 24 hours is ideally given before cleaning, disinfecting, and reoccupation of those spaces will take place. If this time is not possible, a period of as long as possible will be given. CDC/public health guidance for the disease in question will be followed.
- b) Any common areas entered, surfaces touched, or equipment used shall be cleaned and disinfected immediately.
- c) See the section on Cleaning and Disinfection for additional information on that subject.

Identification of potential employee and contractor exposures will be conducted.

- a) If an employee or contractor is confirmed to have the disease in question, The Town Supervisor should inform all contacts of their possible exposure. Confidentiality shall be maintained as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- b) Apply the steps identified in item A, above, as applicable, for all potentially exposed personnel.

The Town Supervisor must be notified in these circumstances and who is responsible for ensuring these protocols are followed

We recognize there may be nuances or complexities associated with potential exposures, close contacts, symptomatic people, and those testing positive. We will follow CDC/public health recommendations and requirements and coordinate with our local public health office for additional guidance and support as needed.

11. Cleaning and Disinfecting

CDC/public health guidelines will be followed for cleaning and disinfection of surfaces/areas. Present guidance for routine cleaning during a public health emergency includes:

As much as possible, employees and contractors will clean their own workspaces in the beginning, middle, and end of their shifts, at a minimum.

- a) High traffic/high touch areas and areas which are accessible to the public/constituents will be disinfected at least hourly.
- b) The Town Supervisor or their designee are responsible for cleaning common areas, and the frequency of such

Staff tasked with cleaning and disinfecting areas will be issued and required to wear PPE appropriate to the task.

Soiled surfaces will be cleaned with soap and water before being disinfected.

Surfaces will be disinfected with products that meet EPA criteria for use against the virus in question and which are appropriate for that surface.

Staff will follow instructions of cleaning products to ensure safe and effective use of the products.

12. Employee and Contractor Leave

Public health emergencies are extenuating and unanticipated circumstances in which The Town of Thurston is committed to reducing the burden on our employees and contractors. The *Families First Coronavirus Response Act* provided requirements related to the COVID-19 pandemic, which form the policies outlined below. This policy may be altered based upon changes in law or regulation, as applicable.

Under legislation signed by Governor Cuomo, New York workers are guaranteed job protection and financial compensation while they are on a **mandatory or precautionary order** due to COVID-19.

YOU ARE ENTITLED TO THE FOLLOWING PROTECTIONS AND BENEFITS IF YOU ARE SUBJECT TO A MANDATORY OR PRECAUTIONARY QUARANTINE ORDER.

If you work for a public employer (no matter the number of employees) you are entitled to:

At least 10 -14 days of paid sick leave.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

- If you are quarantined but are able to work from home you do not qualify for these benefits.
- If your business is closed due to COVID-19, your employees may immediately apply for Unemployment Insurance.
- You may be eligible for additional leave under PFL and DB. Please call the Hotline for more information.

QUESTIONS:

For more information go to **ny.gov/COVIDpaysickleave**

Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Paid Sick leave Hotline: 844-337-6303

It is our policy that employees of The Town of Thurston will not be charged with leave time for testing. Employees will be provided with up to two weeks (80 hours) of paid sick leave at the employee's regular rate of pay for a period which the employee is unable to work due to quarantine (in accordance with federal, state, or local orders or advice of a healthcare provider), and/or experiencing symptoms and seeking medical diagnosis.

THE ABOVE INFORMATION IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Additional provisions may be enacted based upon need and the guidance and requirements in place by federal and state employment laws, FMLA, executive orders, and other potential sources.

Contractors, either independent or affiliated with a contracted firm, are not classified as employees of The Town of Thurston and as such are not provided with paid leave time by Town, unless required by law.

13. Documentation of Work Hours and Locations

In a public health emergency, it may be necessary to document work hours and locations of each employee and contractor to support contact tracing efforts. Identification of locations shall include on-site work, off-site visits, etc. This information may be used by The Town of Thurston to support contact tracing within the organization and may be shared with local public health officials.

The Town of Thurston Supervisor or their designee shall designate the department to detail the means and methods of tracking hours and locations, which may be paper based or electronic logging, tracking via a smartphone app or other.

14. Housing for Essential Employees

There are circumstances within a public health emergency when it may be prudent to have essential employees lodged in such a manner which will help prevent the spread of the subject communicable disease to protect these employees from potential exposure, thus helping to ensure their health and safety and the continuity of The Town of Thurston's essential operations.

If such a need arises, hotel rooms are expected to be the most viable option. If hotel rooms are for some reason deemed not practical or ideal, or if there are no hotel rooms available, The Town of Thurston will coordinate with the Town of Thurston Fire Department of the Steuben County Public Health to help identify and arrange for these housing needs. The Town Supervisor is responsible for coordinating this.

15. Resolution # 2025-6

Motion to Approve:

Second to Motion:

Roll Call:

Michael Volino _____

Holly Chase _____

Noel Sylvester _____

Dan Gee _____

Jen Hargrave _____

Adopted on January 2, 2025 by a _____ vote of the governing board of the **Town of Thurston.**