Guidelines and expectation for reporting to work, working from home,
and social isolation during COVID-19 pandemic

March 18, 2020

PMLP is taking steps to ensure that employees are safe, our system remains stable, and that we are able to respond to emergencies during the COVID-19 pandemic. We have developed guidelines based on information available from government officials and other municipal utilities.

We have already lowered our exposure risk by limiting frequent contact with the general public. We will continue this practice until we are reasonably certain that the pandemic threat has subsided. These further steps will reduce the likelihood of the virus spreading among PMLP employees.

Current guidelines continue to stress long-standing best practices:

1. Anyone who exhibits any sign of sickness should stay at home and avoid contact with co-workers.
2. Wash hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and water, and if not available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
3. Practice respiratory etiquette (cover coughs and sneezes.)
4. Do not use co-worker’s phones, desks, offices, work tools and equipment when possible. (If unavoidable, sanitize first.)

As part of the team, you know that Peabody Municipal Light Plant (PMLP) provides a vital service to our community and must preserve the integrity of our operations and electric service for our customers during this emergency condition. We will follow appropriate emergency steps already in place in the PMLP Emergency Operations Strategic Plan. Even though no interruption in service is anticipated, the guidance offered in the plan is applicable.

Effective immediately we will institute a protocol for (1) working in the office, and (2) working at home as part of a social isolation program in line with CDC guidelines. In most departments, this will be accomplished through a work rotation. Specifically, one group will work in the office for a two-week period while a second group will stay at home. The second group will then work a two-week period while the first group remains home.

With fewer employees in the office setting, “social distancing” will be possible. Using workstations separated by a safe distance (commonly 6 feet) will be expected when possible. Contact among employees working on site should be kept to a minimum, with phone and email communication being preferred.

Each day the office will be cleaned. Common areas will be a priority for cleaning and sanitizing. Other measures such as fogging or outside cleaning crews may be instituted.

Some employees will be working from home, and others may be observing self-isolation, but the following points apply:

1. You will be paid a regular 40-hour schedule, or receive your regular salary. Employees working from home who are not exempt from the overtime requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act will be required to accurately record all hours worked using a prescribed time-keeping system. Overtime must still be approved in advance,
2. There will be no reduction in health benefits.
3. All employees are to take their assignment seriously and to generally remain at home and avoid exposure to non-family members. Further, access to PMLP should be avoided, and cleared by your supervisor ahead of time, except for responding to emergency or trouble calls.
4. Conference call lines are available if needed. Consult your Division Manager for credentials.
5. Consistent with PMLP's expectations of information security for employees working at the office, employees staying/working at home will be expected to ensure the protection of proprietary company and customer information. Steps include, but not limited to, securing paperwork or electronic information, password protection, and other measures appropriate for the job and environment.
6. Employees working at-home are expected to maintain social distancing and keep any at home workspace in a safe manner, and free from safety hazards.
7. Employees who will work at home should identify appropriate needs (including hardware, software, supplies, etc.) and communicate that need through the appropriate PMLP supervisor.
8. Working from home is subject to the same job performance standards as in the office. You are encouraged to discuss expectations working from home with family members to minimize distractions as much as possible under the circumstances.
9. Not every employee in the rotation will be able to work from home, however the at-home duty will be considered equitable to all employees.
10. Any at-home work is expected to be completed to the best of the employee’s ability.
11. Employees on at-home duty who become sick must report their condition to their supervisor, and will not be considered available for the day. Sick benefits, if available, may be applied. Daily call-in will be required, and if an absence extends beyond three days, a written doctor’s approval to return to work will be required as usual.
12. If an employee cannot return to regular duty and they did not notify their supervisor of a condition that prohibits them from returning, then benefit time could be deducted or pay could be withheld.
13. It is the expectation that any employee who tests positive for COVID-19, or has symptoms of COVID-19 recognizes their obligation, in the interest of general public health and their fellow employees, to immediately notify their supervisor and appropriate health officials of their condition.
14. Employees on at-home duty are subject to be recalled to on-site duty at any time and shall report to PMLP in the typical timely manner as for a normal work shift.
15. While on at-home duty those who work in an “on-call” position, or have emergency response in their job description, shall immediately report to work if directed by PMLP.
16. Call-in lists and “on-call” line workers list may be revised to allow those employees who are socially-isolating to remain doing so, if possible.
17. Our EAP provider, Nickey Mullins continues to be available for personal and confidential consultations. All family members are eligible for this service, and encouraged to call if you wish to discuss issues. Her number is 978-304-6551.

This workgroup rotation period will be reviewed by the Utility Manager, and may be extended, changed, modified or cancelled at any time. Employees acknowledge that this plan is not precedent setting, nor will it constitute past practice. The sole purpose of this plan is to “flatten the curve” of the spread of the coronavirus and protect PMLP employees and business operations.

If conditions continue to deteriorate additional steps and/or measures will be implemented without prejudice or precedent.

This program will remain in force for as long as it is deemed necessary by the Utility Manager.

The situation around COVID-19 is unprecedented and very fluid. We appreciate your cooperation and patience as we work through these challenges together.

If you have any questions or concerns, please let your Division Manager know. We hope that you and everyone in your family stays safe.