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Election Day COVID-19 Preparedness Plan for City of Rochester Polling Places

The City of Rochester is committed to providing safe and healthy polling places for all our voters and election workers. To ensure we have safe and healthy voting locations, the City of Rochester Office of the City Clerk has developed the following Election Day COVID-19 Preparedness Plan in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Head and team election judges along with City and County staff are all responsible for implementing this plan. Our goal is to mitigate the potential for transmission of COVID-19 in our polling places and communities, and that requires full cooperation among our election workers, City teammates, Olmsted County, and voters. Only through this cooperative effort can we establish and maintain the safety and health of all persons in our polling places.

The Election Day COVID-19 Preparedness Plan is administered by City Clerk’s Office, who maintains the overall authority and responsibility for the plan. However, management and workers are equally responsible for supporting, implementing, complying with and providing recommendations to further improve all aspects of this COVID-19 Preparedness Plan. City teammates and head election judges have our full support in enforcing the provisions of this plan.

Our Election Day workers are our most important assets to ensuring a safe and successful election event. The City of Rochester is serious about safety and health and protecting our workers. Worker involvement is essential in developing and implementing a successful COVID-19 Preparedness Plan. Because of the nature of elections work, we do not have an on call workforce ready to assist in the development of these plans. Instead, we have relied both on the work done by the City of Rochester in its general COVID-19 safety planning for all City employees and worksites, as well as the specific guidance developed by the Minnesota Secretary of State in conjunction with the Minnesota Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control. We intend to solicit feedback and additional suggestions from our election workers after the August Primary and ahead of the November General Election to make any further adaptations that may be appropriate for this plan.

The City of Rochester’s Election Day COVID-19 Preparedness Plan follows the industry guidance developed by the state of Minnesota, available at the Stay Safe Minnesota website (https://staysafe.mn.gov), which is based upon Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) guidelines.
for COVID-19, Minnesota Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MNOSHA) statutes, rules and standards, and Minnesota’s relevant and current executive orders. It addresses:

- ensuring sick workers stay home and prompt identification and isolation of sick persons;
- physical distancing – workers must be at least six-feet apart;
- worker hygiene and source controls, including face coverings;
- workplace cleaning and disinfection protocol; and
- communications and training practices and protocol.

The City of Rochester has reviewed and incorporated the industry guidance applicable to our business provided by the state of Minnesota for the development of this plan, including the industry guidance for elections from the Minnesota Office of the Secretary of State. Other conditions and circumstances included in the industry guidance and addressed in the plan that are specific to operating polling places on Election Day include:

- additional Election Day protocols for voters;
- additional Election Day protocols for election judges;
- additional polling place protocols for managing occupancy;
- additional polling place protocols for limiting hand-to-hand contact;
- additional polling place protocols for assisting voters; and
- additional polling place protocols for setting up the polling place.

**Ensure sick workers stay home and prompt identification and isolation of sick persons**

Election workers are being informed of and encouraged to self-monitor for signs and symptoms of COVID-19. The following policies and procedures are being implemented to assess workers’ health status prior to entering the workplace and for workers to report when they are sick or experiencing symptoms.

- Head election judges contact all judges working in their polling location in the week immediately before an election. Part of the protocol for these calls will include asking basic health screening questions of all team judges as part of these calls to verify no recent exposure or symptoms of COVID-19 for all judges planning to work on Election Day.
- All election workers have been instructed not to work with symptoms of illness, and given procedures for calling in to report their absence if needed to the City Clerk’s Office.
- Any election worker who becomes sick during the course of Election Day must immediately notify their head judge and will be sent home.

**Physical distancing – Workers and voters must be at least six-feet apart**

Physical distancing of at least six feet will be implemented and maintained between election workers and with all voters and visitors to the polling place through the following engineering and administrative controls:
• OPTIONS FOR VOTERS TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN POLLING PLACES:
  o Reduction in the number of voters in polling places by promoting options to vote before Election Day, including absentee voting by mail and in person absentee voting at times that may be less busy during the 46 day absentee voting period before each election.
  o Offering easy and accessible curbside voting at every polling place. Enhanced signage and tents will be used to clearly indicate where curbside voting is located at each polling place, with election judges trained to watch for voters wishing to utilize it. This allows voters who are not able to come into a polling place for any reason – including health and safety concerns – to vote while remaining safely in their vehicles.

• POLLING PLACE SET UP:
  o Polling place locations were carefully evaluated, and where necessary, relocated for the remaining elections in 2020. We moved out of polling places that house a vulnerable population, such as senior facilities, as well as locations with other significant traffic on Election Day and those places that are too small to implement adequate physical distancing throughout the voting process. Public schools in Rochester are already slated to be closed on both election days remaining this year, and therefore are still available as ideal locations without other traffic, and with ample space for both voting and parking, including curbside voting areas.
  o Polling place set up instructions are being customized for each voting location, clearly indicating how to set up voting equipment and supplies to ensure a minimum of six feet of distance between voting stations. This includes poll pad stations where voters initially check in and register to vote, ballot tables where voters receive ballots, voting booths where voters can complete their ballot, and the ballot tabulators where completed ballots are deposited.
  o Separate entrances and exits for each polling location possible have been identified to ensure one way foot traffic within the polling locations. Guide marks can be made on the floor throughout the voting area with the provided non-marking tape to help indicate to voters how to follow the prescribed traffic flow.
  o Election judges are being trained to manage any lines for voters to enter the voting area to maintain a minimum of six feet of distance between waiting voters. Adequate indoors or protected space to queue for entering the voting area has been identified for each location, and non-marking tape is being deployed to each precinct to allow election workers to indicate spacing for waiting voters if necessary.
  o A maximum number of voters to be allowed at one time into the voting area has been identified for each polling location. No more than that number of voters will be allowed into the actual voting area at any one time, through controlling the flow of voters into the check in area from any line waiting to enter.
  o At voting stations where it may be possible for voters and election workers to get within six feet of each other, including poll pad stations and the ballot tables, Plexiglas shields are being provided to allow for additional protection for all. Where possible at these stations, adequate distancing must still be observed as well.
  o New COVID-19 Health and Safety Signage for polling places has been provided by the Secretary of State’s office, and must be posted in each polling location reminding voters to follow safety protocols, including maintaining physical distancing.
• Election judges must avoid congregating in small break areas. Where possible, larger break spaces have been identified. Those working on election day are also encouraged to consider leaving the polling place for their longer meal breaks to avoid small congested spaces.

• Alternatives to handling election materials back and forth hand-to-hand have been identified throughout the voting process, and have been shared as part of the training for election judges.

Worker hygiene and source controls

Basic infection prevention measures are being implemented at our workplaces at all times. Workers are instructed to wash their hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water frequently throughout the day, but especially at the beginning and end of their shift, prior to any mealtimes and after using the restroom. All election workers, voters, and visitors to the polling place are required to wash or sanitize their hands prior to or immediately upon entering the facility. Hand-sanitizer dispensers (that use sanitizers of greater than 60% alcohol) are being placed at entrances and exits to polling locations so they can be used for hand hygiene in place of soap and water, as long as hands are not visibly soiled. Election judges need to monitor these sanitizer dispensers throughout Election Day, to be refilled as necessary from the supplies provided. Voters should be reminded to make sure their hands are dry before touching a ballot.

Source controls are being implemented at our polling places at all times. In compliance with the Executive Order issued by Governor Walz for indoor facilities, face coverings are required to be worn at all times in polling locations by election workers, voters, and any other visitors. Disposable masks will be available near the entrance to the polling place for any voters or other visitors to the polling location who do not have one with them. Face shields will also be provided to all election judges working in each polling place, and are intended to be worn in conjunction with a tight fitting face covering. Voters who are unable to wear a mask or who refuse to do so can be offered the option to utilize curbside voting. If voters refuse to wear a face covering or to use curbside voting, they must be allowed to vote. The incident should be logged in the location’s incident log, and the voter should be encouraged to complete the voting process and leave the location as quickly as possible.

Workplace cleaning and disinfection protocol

Regular practices of cleaning and disinfecting have been implemented, including ongoing cleaning and disinfecting of work surfaces, equipment, materials and areas in the work environment, including restrooms, break rooms, and voting stations. Frequent cleaning and disinfecting is being conducted of high-touch areas, including keyboards, touch screens, tables, voting booths, tabulators, door handles, elevator panels, etc.

Appropriate and effective cleaning and disinfecting supplies have been purchased and are available for use in accordance with product labels, safety data sheets and manufacturer specifications, and are being used with required personal protective equipment for the product, including non-latex gloves to be worn only during cleaning. Guidance on proper disinfecting procedures is being provided with cleaning supplies at each location.

Specific cleaning guidance includes:

• Where possible, keep doors propped open to minimize touch points. This can also help increase fresh air flow within the polling place.
• Disinfect surfaces between use/users, especially voting booths, assistive voting devices, tables, and pens. Disinfecting spray being provided can be used for this purpose, and sprayed and allowed to air dry or wiped dry with the provided cloths.
  o On common contact surfaces, such as voting booths, overflow tables, and assistive voting devices, laminated sheets of paper will be provided that say on one side: “This surface has been sanitized and is ready for use. Please flip this sheet over when you leave.” And on the second side, the sheet reads: “This surface needs to be sanitized before use.” This will help election workers track what needs to be sanitized and when.
• Election workers should clean equipment within full view of voters to maintain public confidence.
• A clearly marked bin will be provided in each location for used pens, so they can be sanitized before being used again.

Communications and training practices and protocol

This Election Day COVID-19 Preparedness Plan for the City of Rochester is being communicated to all election workers as part of their required training before Election Day, with additional in depth training for head judges in each polling location. Additional communication and training will be ongoing by keeping this updated plan available for all election workers on our website, along with any key updates. Training will be provided to all new election workers who subsequently complete training and prior to their initial assignment to a polling location.

Instructions will be communicated to all election workers, including city and county employees, election judges, vendors and outside technicians, and voters and visitors to the polling place about protections and protocols, including: 1) social distancing protocols and practices; 2) drop-off, pick-up, delivery and general in-store shopping; 3) practices for hygiene and respiratory etiquette; 4) requirements regarding the use of face-coverings and/or face-shields by workers and others in each polling location. All workers will also be advised not to enter the polling location if they are experiencing symptoms or have contracted COVID-19.

Head election judges and City of Rochester staff are expected to monitor how effective the program has been implemented. All management and workers are to take an active role and collaborate in carrying out the various aspects of this plan, and update the protections, protocols, work-practices and training as necessary. This Election Day COVID-19 Preparedness Plan has been certified by the Office of the City Clerk and the plan was posted electronically and made readily available to all election workers. It will be updated as necessary by the Office of the City Clerk.

Additional protections and protocols

Other conditions and circumstances addressed in this plan that are specific to our business include:

Election Day Protocols for Voters

Voters must wear face coverings

Following best practices as well as the Governor’s Executive Order, election judges and voters must wear face coverings.
Voters who do not have a face covering will be given a disposable mask prior to entry. Voters who refuse to wear a face covering will be allowed to vote; the incident will be documented.

**Voters will be given hand sanitizer when they enter and exit the voting area**

A sanitizing station will be at the entrance and exit, with signage. Each voter will be asked to apply sanitizer before they enter and again before they exit. Voters who refuse or who for any reason cannot apply the sanitizer (allergy, etc.) will still be allowed to vote.

**Voters must observe physical distancing throughout the voting process**

6’ intervals must be kept as much as possible while inside the polling place, and while waiting to enter the voting area. Areas may be marked to indicate the 6’ distance. Space for inside queuing while maintaining required distancing has been identified in all polling locations. Plexiglas will be in place at some stations where voters and judges may not be able to keep as much distance.

Voting booths and check-in tables will be spaced at least 6’ apart. At least one table will be available for voters who need assistance (which may require two election judges of different parties or someone of the voter’s choice) to use so they can maintain social distance as much as possible, rather than crowding around a booth together.

**Voters will be offered a sanitized pen (or can bring their own)**

Voters can get a sanitized pen at the polling place entry. They will discard their pen before leaving; election judges will disinfect the pen before being returned to the entrance.

Voters are welcome to bring their own pen, if desired. This should be a standard ink pen, in blue or black ink. Avoid sharpies, gel pens and other pens that may bleed through paper.

**Voters can choose to vote curbside and avoid entering the polling location**

If a voter cannot easily leave their vehicle for mobility reasons, or because they need to avoid contact with others as a health precaution, they can ask to have a ballot brought out to them. This is known as 'curbside voting.'

Two election judges from different major political parties will be assigned this task. They must sanitize their hands immediately before and after serving a voter curbside, as these voters may be some of the most vulnerable to infection.

**Voters can expect efforts to minimize direct hand-to-hand contact**

Procedures throughout the voting process have been reviewed for recommendations to avoid unnecessary hand-to-hand contact between voters and election workers.
**Election Day Protocols for Election Judges**

**Head Judges**

*Verify health screening importance in pre-election phone calls with all judges*

Head judges make calls to all judges assigned to their polling location in the days immediately prior to each election. As part of these calls, head judges should emphasize that any judge experiencing symptoms of illness must not report to a polling place on Election Day. Head judges will receive instructions on what to go over with each judge along with their call lists, and will review a symptom and exposure questionnaire as part of these calls.

* Spend additional time on pre-election polling place set up*

Head judges typically access the polling place the day before the election for initial setup. This will be more even more important now, so that social distancing marks and other setup requirements can be implemented. Judges will receive instructions on how and where to place social distancing marks within their polling location. Head judges are receiving an increased stipend to cover the additional time needed for preparations this year.

**All Election Judges**

*Election judges showing signs of illness must remain home*

Election judges showing signs of illness must not come to the polling place. If any judge develops symptoms or learns of potential exposure to COVID-19 that requires them to self-quarantine at the time of the election, they should contact the City Clerk’s Office at 507-328-2900 as soon as possible. On Election Day, before starting their shift, each judge will review a questionnaire and verify they have no known recent exposure to COVID-19 and are not currently experiencing any symptoms.

*Election judges must wear face coverings*

Following best practices as well as the Governor’s Executive Order, election judges and voters must wear face coverings.

Election judges can bring their own cloth face covering; disposable face coverings will also be available in the polling location if necessary. Face shields will be provided for all election judges to wear over a face covering. Those who need an accommodation (for example, a condition that precludes them from wearing certain face coverings) should contact us for arrangements. Judges unable to wear a face covering of any kind will be unable to serve in 2020, and welcomed back in future election years.

*Election judges must regularly sanitize hands*

Election judges should follow recommended precautions while in the polls, including not touching their face and frequently washing or disinfecting their hands.

Election judges should make use of both sinks in restrooms near the voting area as well as sanitizer to frequently clean and sanitize their hands throughout the day while serving voters.
At a minimum, this should be done during breaks, after using the restroom, before and after mealtimes, and before and after administering curbside voting.

**Clean and disinfect surfaces and shared materials regularly**

Disinfectant will be provided for judges to apply to all surfaces, including equipment screens. Gloves will be available to use while performing cleaning and sanitizing.

Wipe surfaces before polls open and frequently during the day. Surfaces include voting booths, tables, doorknobs, light switches, poll books, the AutoMARK and the tabulator.

Items used by multiple voters, such as pens and privacy sleeves, also need to be sanitized using the supplied materials between each use.

To limit the number of high-touch surfaces, prop open doors when possible.

**No potlucks, eating or drinking at work stations, or gathering in small areas**

Election judges often share a potluck meal during the day; for this election that will not be possible. No eating or drinking will be allowed at workstations within the polling area. Avoid congregating in small break areas. Judges need to maintain physical distancing requirements in identified break spaces; where possible, judges may consider leaving the polling location during break period(s).

**Provide clear instructions to voters**

Election judges must make every effort to prepare those standing in line for what to expect inside the voting area, such as wearing a face covering and applying sanitizer.

Remind voters waiting in line to maintain physical distancing.

**Seek alternatives to handling materials back and forth**

Handling materials (voter receipts, ballots, etc.) is unavoidable. However, when possible, seek alternatives to handling materials back and forth. For example, if a voter needs to show a residency document on their phone in order to register to vote, the voter can put it on the table for the poll worker to see, rather than handing it over.

**Additional polling place protocols**

**For managing occupancy**

Each polling location has an established maximum occupancy limit. Voters should queue up in the identified area to wait to enter the voting area at any time the location has reached its maximum occupancy level. The queuing area should be set up with marks to indicate at least 6 feet of spacing between people waiting in line.

One or more greeter judges at each location should monitor the number of people in the voting area, and any line of waiting voters, to maintain occupancy limits and appropriate physical distancing at all times.
For limiting hand-to-hand contact

I Voted Stickers

Cut “I Voted” stickers and place on a table for voters to pick up on their own after voting.

Checking in voters

When able, election judges helping voters register should only examine proof of residence materials visually, without physically touching voters’ documents.

Use the stylus with the poll pads, and disinfect it between election judges when changing roles.

Passing materials

Create a ‘neutral zone’ for passing materials. Voters and election judges can pass voter receipts and documents back and forth by placing them on a table, and then backing away as the other person approaches to retrieve them.

Assisting voters

When election judges are asked to assist a voter with marking a ballot, they should attempt to social distance while maintaining voter privacy. They can view the ballot together in larger print on the assistive voting device (AutoMARK), or work with the voter from across a table that is away from the main traffic of voters.

Setting up the polling place

Voter marks as guides

Use tape to mark spots on the floor for voters to stand in line and at stations with at least six feet of distancing.

Use tables to enforce distancing

Two tables can be placed between voters and judges at different stations to create a wider space between the election judge and the voter, and prevent the voter from inadvertently stepping too close to the judge.

Provide signage or physical markings for traffic flow

Clearly mark points of entry and exit to prevent bottlenecks, and provide signage or physical markers to ensure voters move in one direction throughout the polling place.
The proceeding nine pages together with any appendices constitutes the plan of the City of Rochester for Election Day COVID-19 Preparedness Plan for polling places.

Certified by:

[Signature]

Anissa N. Hollingshead
July 29, 2020
City Clerk, City of Rochester
Appendix A – Guidance for developing a COVID-19 Preparedness Plan

General


Minnesota Department of Health (MDH): Coronavirus – www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus


Businesses


MDH: Materials for businesses and employers – www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/materials


Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (DLI): Updates related to COVID-19 – www.dli.mn.gov/updates


Handwashing

MDH: Handwashing video translated into multiple languages – www.youtube.com/watch?v=LdQuPGVcceg

Respiratory etiquette: Cover your cough or sneeze

CDC: [www.cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/etiquette/coughing_sneezing.html](http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/etiquette/coughing_sneezing.html)

MDH: [www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/prevention.html](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/prevention.html)

**Social (physical) distancing**


MDH: [www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/businesses.html](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/businesses.html)

**Housekeeping**


Environmental Protection Agency (EPA): [www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2](http://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2)

**Employees exhibiting signs and symptoms of COVID-19**


MDH: [www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/basics.html](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/basics.html)

MDH: [www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facilityhlthscreen.pdf](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facilityhlthscreen.pdf)

MDH: [www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/returntowork.pdf](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/returntowork.pdf)

State of Minnesota: [https://mn.gov/covid19/for-minnesotans/if-sick/get-tested/index.jsp](https://mn.gov/covid19/for-minnesotans/if-sick/get-tested/index.jsp)

**Training**


MDH: [www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/about.pdf](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/about.pdf)