



**Pandemic Continuity of
Operations Plan
March 16, 2020**

I. INTRODUCTION

The City of Selma performs essential functions and services that may be adversely affected in the event of a natural or man-made disaster. In such events, the City should have continuity plans to assist in the continuance of its essential functions. Continuing to perform essential functions and provide essential services is vital during times of increased threats from all hazards, man-made or natural. Since the threat to a municipality's continuity of operations is great during a pandemic outbreak; it is important for the City to have a Pandemic Continuity of Operations plan in place to ensure it can carry out its essential functions and services. While we may be forced to suspend some operations due to the severity of a pandemic outbreak, an effective Continuity of Operations Plan can assist the City's efforts to remain operational, as well as strengthen the ability to resume operations.

II. PURPOSE

This plan provides guidance to the City and may serve as the plan for maintaining essential functions and services during a pandemic outbreak. Although certain sections of this document refer to an influenza pandemic, this plan will be utilized during any type of outbreak and modified to adjust to the circumstances of the outbreak. The Pandemic Continuity of Operations Plan will be a living document and will be revised as needed. This guidance neither replaces nor supersedes any current, approved continuity plan; rather it supplements it, bridging the gap between the traditional, all-hazards continuity planning and the specialized continuity planning required for a pandemic by addressing additional considerations, challenges, and elements specific to the dynamic nature of a pandemic.

This guidance stresses that essential functions can be maintained during a pandemic outbreak through mitigation strategies, such as social distancing, increased hygiene, the vaccination of employees and their families, and similar approaches. Pandemics such as influenza may not, in itself, require a traditional continuity response, such as partial or full relocation of the organization's essential functions, although this response may be concurrently necessary due to other circumstances.

III. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

The City of Selma will monitor the severity of the pandemic and establish continuity activation triggers to address the unique nature of the pandemic threat. The Pandemic Continuity Plan will be implemented as needed to support the continued performance of essential functions and will address considerations and elements specific to pandemic events and emerging infectious diseases/illnesses.

IV. CONTINUITY PLANNING

All City personnel are to be informed regarding protective actions and/or modifications related to this plan. Messaging and risk communications during an emerging infectious disease/illness or pandemic will be conducted by the Mayor's Office in conjunction with EMA. Guidance and instructions on established infection control measures such as social distancing, personnel

protective equipment and telework policies will be provided to assist in limiting the spread of illness at the primary and alternate worksite as it becomes available.

Within the workplace, social distancing measures could take the form of: modifying the frequency and type of face-to-face employee encounters (e.g., placing moratoriums on hand-shaking, substituting teleconferences for face-to-face meetings, staggering breaks, posting infection control guidelines); establishing flexible work hours or worksite, (e.g., telecommuting); promoting social distancing between employees and customers to maintain three-foot spatial separation between individuals; and implementing strategies that request and enable employees with infectious diseases/illnesses to stay home at the first sign of symptoms.

The City will communicate with its employees, particularly any who are in harm's way. Messaging will be consistent throughout the organization.

Frequent, daily contact is important to keep employees informed about developments in the organization's response, impacts on the workforce, and to reassure employees that the organization is continuing to function as usual.

Planners and pandemic response teams should include deliberate methods to measure, monitor, and adjust actions to changing conditions and improved protection strategies.

- Implement a formal worker and workplace protection strategy with metrics for assessing worker conformance and workplace cleanliness.
- Monitor and periodically test protection methods.
- Track and implement changes in approved or recommended protection measures.
- Pre-position material and equipment onsite.
- Ensure essential personnel are at the primary worksite.
- Reaffirm that essential suppliers have their material and personnel on-hand and are able to respond and support as planned.
- Coordinate with local public health and emergency response points of contact to ensure open, adequate communications.

Department-specific risk assessments that identify exposures for all personnel and/ or positions will be conducted initially and periodically. These assessments should be kept as part of each department's specific action plan documentation.

Each Department shall create a department specific plan including their selected mitigation, prevention, protection, or control measures, to include those necessary during a pandemic. Plans may change as current conditions mandate.

V. PANDEMIC PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS

The Assumptions section addresses the overarching planning assumptions that were used in developing the City's Pandemic Continuity of Operations Plan.

A. ORGANIZATIONAL ASSUMPTIONS

- The City will be provided with guidance and/or direction by Federal, State, local and/or Tribal governments regarding current pandemic status in its area.
- The City will have actionable plans and procedures to assist in the ability to remain operational during a pandemic. Plans and procedures may include social distancing protocols, personal protection equipment (PPE), and temporary suspension of some non-essential activities.
- The City has a viable Agency-wide continuity capability and each City component has a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP).
- The City will review its continuity communications programs to ensure they are fully capable of supporting pandemic and other related emergencies, and give full consideration to supporting social distancing operations, including telework and other virtual office options.
- City controlled buildings will be accessible, but right of entry may be limited.
- The City may utilize alternate facilities or deploy employees to alternate facilities.
- During an event, the City may make its alternate facilities available for staff to implement social distancing protocols.
- Essential functions, operations, and support requirements will continue to be people dependent. However, human interactions may be remote or virtual, resulting in the employment of appropriate teleworking and other approved social distancing protocols.
- Travel restrictions, such as limitations on mass transit, implemented at the Federal, State, tribal, territorial, and local levels may affect the ability of some staff to report to work.
- Additional funding will be budgeted for the acquisition of additional equipment required for a possible surge in teleworking capabilities and for supplies and equipment needed to protect personnel and the public.

VI. PANDEMIC RESPONSE

A. PANDEMIC COORDINATORS AND PANDEMIC RESPONSE TEAMS:

The City's Pandemic Continuity Coordinator will oversee a Pandemic Response Team (PRT) to anticipate the impacts of a pandemic on the City and to assist with developing strategies to manage the effects of an influenza or other infectious outbreak. The City of Foley's Emergency Manager has been designated as the Agency Pandemic Continuity Coordinator who will work with a team of advisors from various City Departments.

Each department will identify and designate representatives to be assigned to the PRT, with representatives of all relevant stakeholders, to support the Pandemic Continuity Coordinator.

The City's team is comprised of the following:

- *Mayor and/or Council Member Representative;*
- *City Administrator;*
- *Directorial Staff or their Representative;*
- *Emergency Management Representative;*

B. RISK COMMUNICATIONS:

The City will develop pandemic risk communications procedures for communicating with all internal and external stakeholders. This includes the use of existing notification rosters with names and telephone numbers of elected officials, City Leadership staff and key department personnel. These rosters are maintained and updated by the Emergency Manager.

The City will utilize e-mail, text messaging, radio broadcasts and social media to reach internal and external stakeholders. The City’s Marketing Department will play a critical role in disseminating information to the public.

VII. ELEMENTS OF A VIABLE PANDEMIC CONTINUITY CAPABILITY

A. ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS

Given the expected duration and potential multiple waves of pandemic outbreaks, organizations must review the process involved in carrying out essential functions and services in order to develop plans that mitigate the effects of the pandemic while simultaneously allowing the continuation of operations which support essential functions. The City has identified essential functions and services needed to sustain its mission and operations during a pandemic. The City’s Essential Functions are placed here.

1. Pandemic Response Team
2. Police Services
3. Fire Services
4. Trash Pick-Up and Disposal
5. Payroll
6. Accounts Payable
7. IT Support

B. ORDERS OF SUCCESSION

Since pandemics may affect regions of the United States differently in terms of timing, duration, the City has identified orders of succession that are at least three deep per position where possible while considering dispersing successors to various geographically separated locations, as appropriate.

C. DELEGATIONS OF AUTHORITY

At the height of a pandemic wave, absenteeism may be significant, as such, the City has established delegations of authority that are at least three deep to take into account the expected rate of absenteeism and regional nature of the outbreak to help assure continuity of operations over an extended time period. The Continuity Plan for each essential function listed in Section A above provides the Department’s Delegation of Authority. The City’s Delegations of Authority for the senior leadership are placed here.

1. Mayor, Council President, President Pro-Temp

2. Council President, President Pro-Temp
3. Human Resource Director

D. CONTINUITY FACILITIES

The traditional use of continuity facilities to maintain essential functions and services may not be a viable option during a pandemic. Rather, safe work practices, which include social distancing and transmission interventions, reduce the likelihood of contacts with other people that could lead to transmission. The City has developed preventative practices such as social distancing procedures, hygiene etiquette, and cancellation of organizations non-essential activities to reduce the spread of the pandemic. The City would relocate offices to other locations if necessary.

E. CONTINUITY COMMUNICATIONS

According to the National Strategy Implementation Guidance, workplace risk can be minimized through implementation of systems and technologies that facilitate communication without person- to-person contact. The City has identified communication systems needed to perform essential functions.

F. ESSENTIAL RECORDS MANAGEMENT

The City shall identify, protect, and ensure the ready availability of electronic and hardcopy documents, references, records, and information systems needed to support essential functions during a pandemic outbreak. The City has identified systems, databases, and files that are needed to ensure essential functions remain operational.

G. HUMAN RESOURCES

Although a pandemic illness outbreak may not directly affect the physical infrastructure of an organization, a pandemic will ultimately threaten all operations by its impact on an organization's human resources. The health threat to personnel is the primary threat to maintaining essential functions and services during a pandemic outbreak. The City has established plans to protect the entire employee population and their families, with additional guidance for key personnel, council members, and other essential personnel, should a pandemic illness outbreak occur.

See Addendum #1

H. TEST, TRAINING AND EXERCISES

Testing, training, and exercising are essential to assessing, demonstrating, and improving an organization's ability to maintain its essential functions and services. The organization conducts annual tests, training, and exercises to ensure sustainable social distancing techniques, and to assess the impacts of reduced staff on the performance of essential functions. The organization conducts continuity exercises to examine the impacts of pandemic illnesses on performing essential functions, and to familiarize personnel with their responsibilities. The organization has

identified resources and trained continuity personnel, needed to perform essential functions and will work in conjunction with Baldwin County EMA to perform continuity testing, training and exercise planning.

I. DEVOLUTION OF CONTROL AND DIRECTION

Devolution is the process of transferring operational control of one or more essential functions to a pre-determined responsible party or parties. Pandemic outbreaks will occur at different times, have variable durations, and may differ in the severity; therefore, full or partial devolution of essential functions may be necessary to continue essential functions and services. Outsourcing of functions as needed shall be approved by the Mayor.

Various Mutual Aid Agreements are in place with local jurisdictions and/or agencies such as the South Alabama Mutual Assistance Agreement.

J. RECONSTITUTION

Reconstitution is the process whereby an organization has regained the capability and physical resources necessary to return to normal (pre-pandemic) operations. The objective during reconstitution is to effectively manage, control, and, with safety in mind, expedite the return to normal operations. The City has developed reconstitution plans and procedures, in conjunction with local public health authorities, to ensure facilities/buildings are safe to return. The City realizes the possibility that not all employees may be able to return to work at the time of reconstitution and may consider hiring temporary or permanent workers in order to complete the reconstitution process.

All departments will work with Finance to determine the economic impact of the pandemic.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Maintaining the City's essential functions and services in the event of pandemic illnesses requires additional considerations beyond traditional continuity planning. Unlike other hazards that necessitate the relocation of staff performing essential functions to an alternate operating facility, a pandemic may not directly affect the physical infrastructure of the organization. As such, a traditional "continuity activation" may not be required during a pandemic outbreak. However, a pandemic outbreak threatens an organization's human resources by removing essential personnel from the workplace for extended periods of time. Accordingly, the City's continuity plan addresses the threat of a pandemic outbreak.

Continuity Plans for maintaining essential functions and services in a pandemic should include implementing procedures such as social distancing, infection control, personal hygiene, and cross-training (to ease personnel absenteeism in a critical skill set). Protecting the health and safety of key personnel, Emergency Response Group members, and other essential personnel must be the focused goal of the organization in order to enable the organizations to continue to operate effectively and to perform essential functions and provide essential services during a pandemic outbreak.



Human Resources
Pandemic Continuity of Operations Plan

March 16, 2020

- 1) **Communicating with Employees & Their Families:** Human Resources will communicate with accuracy, timeliness, and solidarity the City’s expectations of employees and what is expected of them during a pandemic outbreak. Conditions can change quickly and news accounts often conflict but the City can be relied upon to provide vetted, accurate, authoritative, and timely information relative to the virus. The City will use various forms of communication to keep employees and their family members informed including but not limited to: the employee hotline, text messaging, payroll, the City’s website, email, and other forms of social media. We will use reliable sources from national, state and local authorities to help inform, educate, and advise employees on an ongoing basis with updates in regard to an influenza outbreak.
- 2) **Media:** Members of the media might try to contact directors, supervisors, and/or employees. It is important that employees know who the media contact is for the City of Selma so they can refer media members to the correct point person. When that is determined, HR will send that information out to all employees.
- 3) **Protecting Employees:** The City will set and model the expectation that sick employees must stay home. Although reliable attendance at work is a standard business expectation, a pandemic challenges this norm. Ensuring that sick employees stay home will be the most powerful and immediate action the City can take to protect our employees and ensure ill ones can fully recover and return to work as quickly as possible (an update to the City’s Personnel Policy will be forthcoming for a “Communicable Disease Policy”). Ongoing communication from HR to employees will instruct employees to stay home if they are experiencing symptoms or having to care for sick family members (without fear of losing their job) and instruct them on what to do as well as communicate other important information and updates regarding the pandemic.
- 4) **Travel Restrictions:** The City may consider canceling non-essential business travel for employees should the situations become pandemic level. If so, HR will notify supervisors, directors, and all employees that travel is restricted.
- 5) **Sick employees will be sent home:** Employees with influenza-like symptoms (eg, coughing, sneezing, extreme fatigue, and fever) are likely contagious. Because influenza (and/or other pandemic type illnesses) strike so quickly, employees may wake up feeling well and arrive at the workplace with symptoms or develop them during the day. In these situations, the City

will immediately separate employees from other employees until they can arrange to get home. It is both permissible and legal to instruct workers who appear to have symptoms to go home and not return until they have recovered. Supervisors and managers will be instructed and trained to send sick employees home.

6) **Sick-leave and pay policies.** A pandemic requires a paradigm shift in managing employee leave time during an outbreak. Faced with so much uncertainty during a pandemic, the temptation to fall back on familiar patterns can be great. The unusual circumstances however call for strategic thinking and an understanding that normal attendance rules simply may not apply. Therefore, if the pandemic continues at moderate severity, HR, with the Mayor's approval, may opt to temporarily modify existing protocols and/or standard operating procedures. For example, if absenteeism reaches serious levels, the City may need to consider other options such as advancing paid time off or use of the Sick Leave Bank for suspected pandemic illnesses. The HR Department will monitor absentee patterns for any unusual increases in absenteeism and in consultation with the Mayor, take appropriate action as may become necessary.

7) **Consider Potential Absenteeism Survey:** The City may consider conducting an employee *Potential Absenteeism Survey* to help aid in determining the potential absentee rate in the event of a pandemic and it would ask certain questions which would help supervisors ascertain which employees may be unable to work for one or more reasons due to the pandemic.

8) **School and childcare closures:** HR will encourage workers to have two levels of backup for childcare and to include the names and contact persons of all such individuals on emergency lists kept by childcare providers. Employees will be advised not to bring children to work, even if they are healthy. In addition to the potential for distraction and disruption, having children at work can violate the City's liability insurance.

9) **Telework options.** If employees must stay home due to ill children or relatives or themselves, some essential job tasks may be able to be performed from home depending on the position and job function. Employees with jobs considered essential to business continuity will need to be identified and steps taken to set them up for telework. It is important to keep in mind that essential jobs don't necessarily equate to hierarchy in the City. Workers who process payroll for example, may not be in the rank of senior management, but their job function is considered essential. However, telework may not be feasible for some positions and/or some may become unworkable due to such difficulties as slow Internet connections, software incompatibility, data security issues, and/or not enough technical support. Employees for teleworking capability will be identified by HR on a case-by-case basis with input from supervisors, directors, and the IT Department. (Telecommuting agreement will be drafted to use in these circumstances).

10) **Social Distancing:** Social distancing measures in the workplace may need to be considered and implemented. For example, attempting to keep 6 feet of space between employees, avoiding crowded work settings, canceling business-related face-to-face meetings, canceling nonessential travel, increasing use of teleworking, and using staggered shifts to allow fewer workers to be in the workplace at the same time. Call forwarding, Google Hangout, and Zoom for meetings are some options the City may implement to keep employees distanced from each other. Social

Distancing measures will be considered and implemented if necessary and the City may implement a formal “Social Distancing Policy” if the need becomes necessary.

11) **Cross-Training:** HR will work with managers, supervisors, and directors to cross-train personnel to perform essential functions so that the workplace is able to operate even if key staff are absent. An inventory of the skills of our workers may be considered to ascertain employees with skill sets that could be put to use in high absenteeism situations. In these scenarios, “tasks” rather than “jobs” can be identified and broken out rather than focusing on trying to replace absent workers. In making these determinations, required and/or special credentials will need to be considered. The City may also explore other sources for backup including special aide agreements in public safety, retired workers, temporary workers, and/or staffing agencies.

12) **Standard Operating Procedures:** Supervisors and Directors should immediately ensure that detailed SOP’s are in place for all jobs in the event they are needed for replacement personnel, particularly essential personnel, in the event of absenteeism.

13) **Flexible Work Arrangements:** Flexible work arrangements for employees who are at highest risk of developing severe complications if they become ill (eg, employees who are pregnant or who have compromised immune systems or chronic health conditions like heart disease or diabetes). These individuals may request accommodations such as telecommuting or taking leave to minimize their possibility of exposure to pandemic illnesses at work. According to the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, unless the pandemic is severe, the Americans with Disabilities Act generally prohibits a business from asking employees if they have a condition that makes them at high risk for pandemic illness complications. However, employees who voluntarily disclose to the City that they have a disability that makes them vulnerable to pandemic illnesses may be entitled to telecommuting or other work arrangements as a reasonable accommodation. The City will closely monitor these cases and take appropriate action to ensure the safety of our high risk employees.

14) **Narrow Scopes of Work:** If the City were to experience peak levels of illness and absenteeism, we may not be able to operate in a “business as usual” mode. In this situation, the City will ascertain what functions we must maintain to keep our doors open and temporarily restructure around those. For example, healthy employees may be instructed to help out in other departments doing tasks not previously performed in their own jobs.

15) **Categorize Employees:** Departments will categorize employee positions into two basic “buckets”: mission-critical and non-mission critical functions. This will be essential for future identification of necessary labor resources and HR will work with IT to ensure mission critical access to technology resources. In each of those categories, there are two subcategories:

1. a) Mission-critical functions and staff:

i) Category 1—Employees who perform a mission-critical activity and must be on site to perform the work.

ii) Category 2—Employees who perform a mission-critical activity and might be able to work remotely.

2. b) Non-mission-critical functions and staff:

i) Category 3—Employees who perform an activity that is not mission-critical but could be performed via remote access. These staff could “backfill” category 1 and 2 staff.

ii) Category 4—Employees who perform an activity that is not mission-critical and cannot be performed via remote access.

16) **Meetings/Conference Calls:** Conference calls will be regularly scheduled with essential personnel, elected officials, and management to review the latest information, develop consistent messaging, and make decisions.

17) **Promote Hygiene Practices:** Not all employees can afford to buy hand sanitizers. The City will provide alcohol-based hand sanitizer, promote effective hand washing, and encourage employees to avoid touching their mouth, nose or eyes. Although it is not clear how much such practices can reduce the spread of the virus, they continue to make good public health sense.

18) **Respiratory Protection:** Many questions remain about how pandemic illnesses (such as influenza) are transmitted. Mounting data, however, support the likelihood of several modes (including viruses being expelled through sneezes and coughs). CDC guidance addresses respiratory protection for workers, including the use of N95 face-fitting respirators. At this time, the CDC does not recommend face masks for healthy people trying to protect against certain viruses. The CDC recommends surgical masks only for people who already show symptoms of a virus and must go outside, since wearing a mask can help prevent spreading viruses by protecting others nearby when you cough or sneeze. The agency also recommends these mask for caregivers of people infected with a virus. The City may consider obtaining a reasonable supply of N95 and/or surgical masks in the event they become necessary for these purposes.

19) **Suspend requirement for a doctor’s note:** Most sick employees will be discouraged from going to clinics unless they have severe complications or are in a high-risk group. As such, most employees will be unable to “prove” they had a pandemic type illness or that they have recovered through a doctor’s note. Requiring one could delay their return to work and therefore the City will not require doctor’s notes for employees due to suspected illness during times of pandemic.

20) **Cleaning Practices:** Human Resources will communicate with employees to clean their work surfaces that are frequently touched with cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas. Most times, the CDC does not recommend additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning. The City will provide cleaning agents to employee to use in City offices, vehicles, etc. Based on input from the CDC (and/or other health officials) during times of pandemic, the City will initiate additional cleaning practices for employees and facilities as needed.

21) **Remain Flexible:** Personnel policies and procedures need to remain flexible during times of pandemic(s). There is a difference between policies and protocols and fortunately, most if not all

of the City's Personnel Policies are flexible enough to allow changes in protocol without violating or having to change City Personnel Policy. Therefore, if it becomes necessary, protocols can be created for special circumstances like a pandemic. If the need arises, policies can be reviewed and/or updated as well to better accommodate and encourage safer and healthier workplaces especially during times of pandemic(s.)