

SOUTHWESTERN POWER ADMINISTRATION PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: SWPA Statement on Coronavirus (COVID-19)

March 24, 2020

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Statement on SWPA Preparation for Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Updated: March 24, 2020

Tulsa, OK – Southwestern Power Administration (Southwestern or SWPA) continues to take active measures to protect its employees and the community at large while making sure that the lights stay on and the grid stays resilient during the coronavirus outbreak.

“As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve, we are continually assessing the needs of our organization, as well as following the direction provided by the Department of Energy (DOE) and other partners,” stated Administrator Mike Wech in an internal email issued to Southwestern employees on Wednesday, March 18, 2020.

In the email, Wech issued an order that all Southwestern facilities be closed to the general public, with no visitation to offices while the restriction is in place.

Wech’s message came on the heels of an earlier notification from DOE allowing maximum telework flexibility for employees to accommodate state and local responses to the outbreak, including, but not limited to, school closings.

In support of the DOE guidance, Southwestern conducted a successful telework/accountability exercise on Thursday, March 19, 2020. According to Southwestern Security Officer Jay Parvin, the exercise was a complete success, both from a network connectivity standpoint and an accountability standpoint.

“Today we completed an accountability exercise in 59 minutes,” Parvin reported. “The accountability exercise was not announced, and no prior notice was provided to managers, directors, or supervisors. With 80 personnel on telework status, it could have been especially challenging.”

Following the successful telework/accountability exercise, Administrator Wech issued another order to employees, stating that, effective Monday, March 23, 2020, “All SWPA Federal employees that are telework ready/capable and have a telework agreement in place should telework until further notice.”

Wech’s notice also contained guidance regarding employee scheduling in mission-critical functions to ensure those functions are maintained while providing for the protection of employees. It also outlined Southwestern’s plans to conduct a thorough evaluation of all planned and proposed power system maintenance in order to implement ongoing social distancing of affected employees.

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“We will continue to follow the directions of the DOE and continue to coordinate with our industry partners and other Federal agencies,” says Administrator Wech. “And we encourage employees to continue to practice safe and healthy procedures when it comes to work and family life.”

As of the date of this press release, Southwestern has had no confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19). According to agency senior leadership and safety officials, Southwestern will handle any potential staff exposures utilizing the COVID-19 hotline process provided by DOE. A summary of DOE response efforts is included for reference.

Southwestern Power Administration is an agency of the U.S. Department of Energy. Its mission is to market and reliably deliver Federal hydroelectric power with preference to public bodies and cooperatives. This is accomplished by maximizing the use of Federal assets to repay the Federal investment and participating with other water resource users in an effort to balance their diverse interests with power needs within broad parameters set by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and implementing public policy. For more information, see <http://www.swpa.gov>.