



THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

FEB 17 2021

Memorandum

To: Heads of Bureaus and Offices

From: Acting Secretary

Subject: Increasing 2021 Support for COVID-19 Response Efforts

President Biden has tasked Federal departments and agencies, including the Department of the Interior (DOI), to support the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) with establishing 100 federally supported COVID-19 vaccination sites, with a goal of delivering 100 million vaccine doses in 100 days. To accomplish this, FEMA and HHS are using the National Response Framework to execute major Federal Government medical countermeasure plans. This extraordinary effort is occurring on an unprecedented scale, one previously discussed in theory and tested in exercises. In short, we have not seen this level of “All-of-Nation” effort since World War II, with the 100-day mark set by the President as our immediate goal.

DOI is poised to support the COVID-19 vaccination campaign in a number of important ways. Specifically, we have been asked to assist in planning and operations for vaccine distribution using our Incident Management Teams as well as our emergency medical service (EMS) resources. We are coordinating with FEMA to ensure support to the insular areas and Tribal nations and are determining the availability of DOI lands and facilities that may be used as vaccination sites.

We must keep pressing forward if we are to reach the estimated 70 to 90 percent vaccination rate that will be required before the Nation can truly emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic. To that end, I am asking that you encourage supervisors in your Bureau/Office to make qualified personnel immediately available for assignments related to the COVID-19 vaccination campaign. The current priority is for DOI to identify employees with EMS qualifications; however, additional assignments will likely be forthcoming. Under the Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness Act, HHS Declaration as amended, and the Federal Tort Claims Act, all Federal employees responding to these assignments are immune from suit with respect to all claims for loss resulting from the administration of a covered countermeasure such as vaccinations, except for instances of willful misconduct.

I fully understand that the assignment of these individuals to the COVID-19 vaccination campaign operations may temporarily affect your office’s priority work and program goals. I also recognize that these resources are also frequently called upon to support DOI’s response to wildfires, hurricanes, volcanoes, and other incidents. While we will certainly remain

prepared to respond appropriately to such incidents and maintain DOI's essential functions, the response to the pandemic is currently my top priority. Please find every opportunity to make your staff available to support this very important mission for our Nation.

If you have staff that are interested in becoming involved in this effort, please have them contact your Bureau/Office Emergency Management Coordinator to document certifications and indicate availability in the DOI resource management systems.

We can get through anything when we all pull together, and this pandemic is no exception. Thank you for your leadership, engagement, and commitment to protecting our Nation from the devastating impacts of COVID-19.