

BEFORE THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
FOR COLUMBIA COUNTY, OREGON

In the Matter of Amending the Columbia )  
County Field Worker Safety Policy ) Order No. 32-2024

WHEREAS, it is in the best interest of the County to establish a policy to provide for safety measures to protect the safety of employees in the field; and

WHEREAS, the Columbia County Field Worker Safety Policy was adopted on March 14, 2018; and

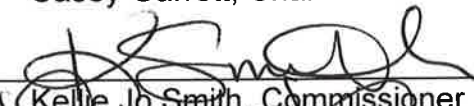
WHEREAS, the County desires to amend the Policy to implement a field workers email group and limited access shared document to be used by County field workers to report real time updates such as hazardous road conditions, road closures, area closures due to police/fire activity, and known hostile properties;

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that the Amended Columbia County Field Worker Safety Policy which is attached hereto as Attachment 1, is adopted.

Dated this 24<sup>th</sup> day of July, 2024.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
FOR COLUMBIA COUNTY, OREGON

By:   
Casey Garrett, Chair

By:   
Kellie Jo Smith, Commissioner

By:   
Margaret Magruder, Commissioner

Approved as to form

By:   
Office of County Counsel

## Attachment 1

# AMENDED

# Columbia County Field Worker

# Safety Policy

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### INTRODUCTION:

Columbia County undertakes a variety of operations that may involve employees either working in or traveling through remote locations where, in the event of an accident or incident, some form of communications equipment or protocol would aid in ensuring that assistance is available.

### PURPOSE:

- To ensure that managers and employees consider communications safety issues, and have a method of ensuring that assistance is provided to employees.

### POLICY STATEMENT:

- Columbia County will utilize communications equipment and/or protocol to ensure that employees are able to receive help in the event of an emergency.
- Prior to engaging in work or travel where there is a risk of loss of contact and a reasonably high hazard potential in the work activity, employees at a minimum must either:
  - (1) Have access to a means of communications to enable them to reach help if they are injured or otherwise require assistance, and,
  - (2) Use a check-in/check-out system as outlined in the County's Check In/Check Out Procedure.

## APPLICATION AND SCOPE:

- This policy applies to all Columbia County employees, including interns and temporary staff, excepting the Columbia County Sheriff's Office which has its own policies and procedures. Local managers or programs may elect to establish their own communications protocol that reflects operational and business needs, provided they meet or exceed the minimum requirements of this safety standard.
- While contractors do not have to check-in/check-out with a Columbia County supervisor, where Columbia County has contracted with other parties to deliver services on its behalf, contractors must have a reasonable method of communicating with their employees and/or monitoring the safety of their employees.

## DEFINITIONS:

- Communications Equipment – A two-way radio, a cellular phone, EPIRB (emergency personal location beacon) or satellite phone.
- Remote Location – A location where help or assistance may not reasonably be expected to be accessible or available.
  - For example, it would include work/travel off main roads in back-country settings, or other isolated areas where an employee cannot reasonably expect to be able to obtain any required assistance without communications equipment.

## MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS:

- All employees must assess potential risks related to work activities, and understand their communications and monitoring needs as a part of the control of those risks before engaging in the work.
- Supervisors must approve of the precautions taken.

Note – An assessment of risk does not have to be in writing, but Supervisors should consider documenting communications requirements/instruction for recurring, common work activities or work locations.

- In assessing risks, employees and supervisors must consider the following factors:
  1. The potential for adverse or severe weather during work or travel-time,
  2. The remoteness of the location and expected availability of emergency assistance,
  3. The potential for confrontation or danger due to the nature of the work,
  4. The usefulness of a particular communications technology (e.g. cell phone should not be selected where coverage is known to be poor or non-existent; two-way radios must have a receiving station that is monitored), and
  5. The presence of others (i.e. whether the employee is working with a buddy present).
- Without limiting the general items above, an employee must either be provided with communications equipment, or use a check-in/check-out system, when the employee will be either:
  1. In a remote location, or,

2. In any location, working/traveling with a reasonable risk of isolation due to poor weather conditions (e.g. if the employee is traveling by car in winter and could be stranded if the car slides off the road into a ditch), or,
  3. In any location, working/traveling on water (or ice in winter)
- A check-in/check-out system must follow one of the following two methods, as directed by the Supervisor:
    1. Use of the (insert department specific phone number), or,
    2. A local workplace missing person protocol with the Supervisor or a designated contact person at the local Columbia County work location, or other pre-determined location. See the sample protocol at Appendix One which may be used as a guide by the department in creating a custom protocol.

Where a local workplace missing person protocol is to be used, the following mandatory components must be included:

1. Employees must follow their local workplace protocol and record their work plans and contact information before engaging in the work.
  2. Supervisors must issue employees with written instructions, which outline the local workplace missing person protocol and any other local direction from the Supervisor required for employee life safety.
  3. Employees must have access to their local workplace missing person protocol during work/travel time which the local workplace will be monitoring, or otherwise have access to program direction about who to call and what contact phone numbers are to be used, in an emergency.
  4. If radio is being used, there must be a local radio-operator available to receive the radio call. (CCOM PSAP 911?)
  5. At a minimum, a local workplace missing person protocol must include:
    - i. Name of Employee
    - ii. Vehicle Identification (Make, Model, Color, License Plate)
    - iii. Secondary Vehicle if Applicable (ATV, Snowmobile)
    - iv. Destination/Location of Work
    - v. Map and/or Route of Travel
    - vi. Day/Time of Departure
    - vii. Date/Time of Expected Return
    - viii. Contact Person(s)
    - ix. Response Instructions for Overdue/Missing Employees
  6. The contact person, who will report an employee as overdue, must be a Columbia County employee (the supervisor or other local team member).
- Supervisors may provide Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacons (EPIRBs) to employees. Where provided, EPIRBs are only to be used in an emergency and are not intended to replace communications equipment (where using it is a viable option).
  - Departments are strongly encouraged to provide and install GPS units in County vehicles to allow those vehicles to be located in case of emergency.
  - The County will provide a Field Workers email address to be used for real time updates such as hazardous road conditions, road closures, area closures due to police/fire activities, known hostile properties, etc. The County

will also provide a limited access shared document for known hostile properties to be reviewed by field workers prior to traveling to the work location.

- Employees must keep assigned communications equipment in good operating condition, by:
  - Taking reasonable care to ensure it is not damaged
  - Ensuring it is carried or located so it is accessible in an emergency. Communications equipment should be carried on the person, not stored in the vehicle. Note if traveling on ice or water the equipment must be kept in a watertight, floating container.
  - Checking-in once they have reached their area of work as a precaution where appropriate (e.g. if it is an area where communications have been difficult in the past or where there has been no previous check of communications reliability).
- Where employees are assigned to work at a remote location, there must be a protocol to initiate an emergency response in the event of an emergency. Note: This does not mean a new, separate individual emergency response plan is required for each work site.

#### RESPONSIBILITIES:

##### Manager:

- Reviews work activities to determine the application of the policy.
- Ensures that the work is organized in accordance with this policy, and that the mandatory requirements have been addressed and implemented in accordance with the local workplace missing person protocol.
- Provides the Safety Committee with a copy of their respective department policy.
- Ensures that communications equipment is provided as required to reasonably manage risk.
- Ensures that a person is designated to monitor a local workplace missing person protocol, as required.

##### Supervisor:

- Ensures that employees review the policy
- Ensures employees are provided training or instruction, including how to operate required communications equipment or follow their check-in/check-out protocol
- Ensures that records of training and instruction are maintained.
- Approves communications risk assessment and precautions to be taken by employees, for specific work activities
- Establishes communications protocols as required.
- Confirms that the employees comply with the requirements of the policy (as applicable), including any local protocols that are developed for employee safety monitoring (e.g. use of local sign-out boards, etc.)
- Works with employees to conduct the risk assessment for the work environment

##### Worker/Employee:

- Works in compliance with this policy, and the training or instruction provided by the Supervisor
- Assesses risks and communication needs related to their work, prior to engaging in specific work activities, in conjunction with the Supervisor
- Works in compliance with the requirements of this policy, or any local direction for check-in/check-out for their local workplace
- Keeps communications equipment in good operating condition
- Reports any deficiencies or hazards related to communications safety to their Supervisor

##### Safety Committee:

- Monitors the application of this policy as part of conducting regular committee duties.

## APPENDIX ONE: Sample of Local Workplace Missing Person Protocol

This protocol is designed for all Columbia County staff when working in the field, where the home location workplace is responsible for monitoring safety communications.

The following are mandatory daily requirements for staff to complete, prior to any outside work activity. A copy of this protocol should be kept in your vehicle or in a place you can access while working out of the office.

Sign Out as designated by your supervisor:

The date, exact destination, routes and expected returned time must be entered. Assign a contact person and let them know of your trip to the field and when you plan to return. Carry an appropriate means of communications with you, in light of your planned work activity and location (i.e. radio, EPIRB, satellite phone or cell phone). If using a radio, ensure it is monitored.

Contact Person and Expected Return Time:

If the expected return time is after normal working hours, it is important that you have a contact person. This person may be either your supervisor or designee.

You must let your contact person know that you will be checking in with them when you return. Your contact person is your lifeline, and must know that you are due back at a certain time, and what their role as the contact person is if you do not arrive as scheduled. Note: Your contact person must know how to contact your Supervisor.

You must communicate with the contact person if you intend to be late.

Employee Contact Information

Must include the following:

- i. Name of Employee
- ii. Office and Home telephone #
- iii. Cellular # and Satellite #
- iv. Pager #
- v. Destination/Location of Work
- vi. Map and/or Route of Travel
- vii. Vehicle Identification (Make, Model, Color, License Plate)
- viii. Secondary Vehicle (ATV or Snowmobile)
- ix. Day/Time of Departure
- x. Date/Time of Expected Return
- xi. Contact Person(s)

Note: Each office workplace missing person protocol must also contain emergency contact phone numbers for local management/supervisors and local emergency services.

Search Initiation:

If you do not check in with your designated contact person at the expected return time, the contact person will make a reasonable effort to attempt to contact you, including (1) calling you directly in the field, and (2) calling your home number. If no contact is made, the manager or supervisor will be contacted by the contact person, and the Supervisor will initiate a search.

**Emergency Response:**

If there is an emergency, accident or incident, a Manager/Supervisor, must be notified immediately.

**Emergency Response:**

When the contact person contacts the manager or supervisor, he/she will initiate the emergency response required based on information received from the contact person.

**Roles and Responsibilities:***Manager/Supervisor*

- Attempt to contact the employee.
- Continue to attempt to contact the employee.
- If an employee has been involved in an emergency situation, follow the steps listed under Emergencies (below).

**Emergencies:**

- Ensure emergency services have been contacted.
- Determine location of employee.
- Determine status of employee.
- Contact family members.
- Determine hospital location where employee has been transported.
- Advise all staff involved with the emergency of any direction received from notified authorities
- Contact Human Resources Director with details of the emergency.
- Notify Safety Committee as they may investigate in the case of a critical injury or fatality.
- Request Critical Incident Stress personnel as appropriate.

*Contact Person/Radio Operator*

- Record all information pertaining to the emergency.
- Notify Manager/Supervisor
- NOTE: the names of any injured individuals or fatalities are NOT to be identified over the air
- Ensure that a communications link is maintained with the field employee.
- Advise all stations that the frequency is not to be used for other than the emergency - will advise when the emergency is over
- Ensure that a log or the radio log book is accurately maintained and secured for investigation purposes.

This process must be used consistently. Columbia County cannot put undue stress on emergency responders by triggering an emergency response as a result of an employee not being diligent about indicating their whereabouts.