



## Rural Development

March 20, 2020

Team Maine,

Deputy Under Secretary Brand has issued a message that Rural Development is entering enterprise-wide remote operational status effective immediately until at least April 3, 2020. This change in operational status will allow us to do what we do best – increase prosperity in Maine’s rural communities – while protecting our health, the health of our families, and the health of RD’s customers.

I have full confidence in our team to continue to provide excellent customer service and deliver our programs remotely. You all do incredible work, and that work won’t stop just because you’re working remotely.

Housekeeping items:

- Please ensure you have everything you will need to be fully operational at home before you leave the office, including: your computer, charging cords, essential files, and government cell phone. You will also need a PIV Card chip reader, if one is not built into your laptop.
- Before leaving the office please secure all confidential / PII information, unplug any small appliances, and take home any food.
- When you pack your things to begin working remotely, please forward your phone. You may forward to either your government cell phone or Jabber on your computer. If you need assistance doing this contact Dan Bentley, IT Specialist, at [daniel.bentley@usda.gov](mailto:daniel.bentley@usda.gov), or 207-990-9105, or another member of the Maine IT Team.
- Do not post an out of office message on Outlook or a voicemail that says you’re out of office. **Working remotely means you are continuing to do your job and you are available to answer calls and emails.** Your voicemail should clearly state that you are available and working; it should also offer your e-mail as an alternate way to reach you.

### Rural Development

967 Illinois Avenue Suite 4 • Bangor ME 04401-2767  
Voice 207.990.9160 • Fax 855.589.1060 • TDD 207.942.7331

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html), or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at US Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington DC 20250-9410, by fax (202) 690-7442 or email at [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).



- You may choose to use this script for voicemail: *Hello, you have reached [NAME – OFFICE]. I am working remotely and available to answer your questions via phone or email. Please leave a voicemail, or email me at [EMAIL ADDRESS].*
- Although our physical offices are closed, Rural Development remains open for business as usual. We will be posting a sign on our office door announcing we are working remotely. The sign includes state contact phone numbers and e-mails for our customers' use.
- If you need to come into the office to access files or equipment to do your job, you may do so. Please contact Tommy Higgins at [tommy.higgins@usda.gov](mailto:tommy.higgins@usda.gov) or 207-990-9103 to arrange a time you can do this while still prioritizing social distancing.
- We will schedule staff on a rotating basis to collect and open priority incoming mail.
- All performance plan elements and standards will remain in place during enterprise-wide remote operational status.

We are going to get through this, and the rural communities we serve are going to get through this.

I promise to keep you all updated with new information as I receive it. Thank you for your service to rural America.

Sincerely,

TIMOTHY P. HOBBS  
State Director  
USDA Rural Development

**Rural Development**

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