



**FORWARD  
PINELLAS**  
Integrating Land Use & Transportation

# **CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS PLAN (COOP)**



# Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)

Amended June 9, 2021

*Forward Pinellas*

*310 Court Street*

*Clearwater, FL 33756*

*Phone: (727) 464-8250*

**Forward Pinellas Web Site:**

<http://www.forwardpinellas.org>

## **FORWARD PINELLAS SERVES AS THE METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION AND PLANNING COUNCIL FOR PINELLAS COUNTY**

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## **I. SUMMARY**

This document provides a structure for formulating a Continuity of Operations (COOP) Plan.

In accordance with the provisions of Part 2, Section 202 (Continuity of Government) of Executive Order 12656 (dated November 18, 1988) and the Department of Homeland Security Headquarters Continuity of Operation Guidance Document dated April 2004, this document serves as the Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) for Forward Pinellas. Local assistance in the development of the COOP was provided by the Pinellas County Emergency Management Department. It was developed to ensure the continuity of essential office functions in the event of a terrorist attack, fire, natural disaster, pandemic, or other emergency. The plan establishes procedures for the following:

- Emergency response;
- Continuation of essential functions; and
- Office evacuation and relocation procedures.

## **II. INTRODUCTION**

Forward Pinellas performs essential functions and services that may be adversely affected in the event of an emergency or disaster. In such events, organizations should have continuity plans to assist in the continuance of their essential functions. Continuing to perform essential functions and provide essential services is vital to an organization's ability to remain a viable entity during times of increased threats from all manmade or natural hazards. Given the threat a natural or man-made disaster or other emergency presents to an organization's continuity of operations, it is important to have a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) in place to ensure we can carry out essential functions and services. While Forward Pinellas may be forced to suspend some operations due to the severity of an emergency, an effective COOP can assist in efforts to remain operational, as well as strengthen its capacity to resume operations after the emergency has passed.

Forward Pinellas serves as the planning council and metropolitan planning organization for Pinellas County. In its role as the Pinellas Planning Council (PPC), Forward Pinellas is governed by a special act of the State Legislature (Chapter 2012-245, Laws of Florida) and the Pinellas County Charter. The PPC is responsible for administering the Countywide Plan and for providing policy advice and recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners, in its role as the Countywide Planning Authority. As the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for Pinellas County, Forward Pinellas operates in accordance with Federal Law (23 USC 134 and 135) and Chapter 339.175, Florida Statutes to address the mobility needs of people and freight while fostering economic growth and minimizing fuel consumption, air pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions. The Pinellas County MPO was established in 1977 following the passage of the Federal Highway Act of 1974. Forward Pinellas facilitates the coordination of countywide transportation and land use planning regionally and countywide by providing a forum for local governments to cooperate on multi-jurisdictional issues and to work out any disputes that may arise. Forward Pinellas also provides for countywide visioning, strategic planning and project programming.

While the planning council function is not subject to the requirements of Executive Order 12656, both the planning council and MPO operate under the same policy board and have integrated administrative and planning functions. Therefore, all Forward Pinellas staff share responsibility in ensuring that the essential operations of the office are maintained in the event of an emergency. Forward Pinellas staff is responsible for assisting the Pinellas County Emergency Management Department in coordinating disaster response and recovery for the County pending execution of an inter-agency agreement that ensures Forward Pinellas is appropriately reimbursed for its services. Forward Pinellas staff who have received supervisory approval of a request for disaster assignment reporting are exempt from this requirement. In this capacity, staff serves as part of Pinellas County's Logistics Group (LG), which manages and coordinates the distribution of resources needed for recovery within Pinellas County, as well as coordinating Special Needs registrations and serving in the Citizens Information Center. Although the most likely cause for activation would be a hurricane, Forward Pinellas must be prepared to respond to any natural or manmade event that may occur.

Should an event threaten or occur in Pinellas County, all Forward Pinellas employees must be prepared to continue the operations of Forward Pinellas. Therefore, Forward Pinellas will provide for continuation of its essential functions in addition to voluntarily assisting the residents and visitors of Pinellas County.

Forward Pinellas offices are located approximately one block from the Gulf of Mexico at 310 Court Street in downtown Clearwater on the second floor of a two-story glass and masonry building. Though not located in a flood zone, broken windows and subsequent freshwater damage are the biggest threats to Forward Pinellas offices should a disaster or other unforeseen emergency occur. The 310 Court Street location does not have an onsite generator to supply power in the event that the building loses electricity. Forward Pinellas offices will be contacted by the Emergency Management Department if the building is rendered unavailable or if an evacuation has been called for the county. This COOP also provides for other emergency events, such as a pandemic, that may impact the ability of Forward Pinellas staff to report to work, without the office spaces being damaged.

**Forward Pinellas Location:**

310 Court Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Clearwater, FL 33756  
(727) 464-8250  
(727) 464-8212 (FAX)

**III. PURPOSE, APPLICABILITY AND SCOPE**

This COOP was prepared to ensure the continued performance of Forward Pinellas' essential functions following a major event, emergency or disaster. It provides instructions and related information concerning actions to be taken to ensure the continuity of essential office functions in case of an event. The COOP is designed to function in coordination with the Pinellas County departments of Emergency Management.

#### IV. ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS

Priority	Essential Functions
1	Provide Technical Support and information to assist in planning and restoration of the county's transportation system. Provide Technical Support and information related to the Countywide Plan, and amend the Countywide Rules, as necessary, to assist in the reconstruction of impacted areas or to support essential recovery actions of local governments.
2	Ensure that the integrity and compliance of the MPO and PPC planning programs are maintained.
3	Maintain contact with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) District 7 Office, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA).
4	Provide compensation associated with MPO agreements and maintain MPO grant invoicing.
5	Approve the Unified Planning Work Program and amend/adopt the Transportation Improvement Program to ensure continued flow of federal and state funds in Pinellas County.

## V. VITAL FILES, RECORDS AND DATABASES

Forward Pinellas' vital files include both electronic and hard copies of executed Interlocal Agreements, Memorandums of Agreement, Memorandums of Understanding, Joint Participation Agreements and other contracts, including those with general planning consultants. These documents are considered official records. In the event of total destruction of Forward Pinellas offices, copies of these documents should be retrievable from the Forward Pinellas offices or other sources. File copies of most of the Forward Pinellas planning documents are available from the FDOT, FHWA and/or FTA. Several regional and interlocal agreements are available from the Pinellas County Clerk of the Court. Forward Pinellas' essential planning documents include the Countywide Plan, Transportation Improvement Program, Unified Planning Work Program and the Long Range Transportation Plan. These are available in hardcopy, online, or CD ROM, and are also stored electronically on the county's main computer network. In the event Forward Pinellas offices are not destroyed, but staff are unable to report to the office location, electronic copies of vital files, records and databases will continue to be maintained on and accessed from the main computer network. Access to the network files will be provided to each member as needed.

Vital File, Record, or Database	Form of Record (e.g., hardcopy, electronic)	Pre-positioned at Alternate Facility	Hand Carried to Alternate Facility	Backed up at Third Location on Main County Computer
COOP Plan	Electronic and hard copy	X	X	X
Phone Roster	Electronic and hard copy	X	X	X
Legal Authority List	Electronic and hard copy	X	X	X
Forward Pinellas Agreements/ Contracts	Hardcopy	X (copies)	X	X
Personnel Information	Hardcopy		X	X
Countywide Plan	Electronic and hardcopy			X
Transportation Data Base Files (operations data, accident records, traffic counts, etc.)	Electronic and hardcopy			X
Transportation Planning Documents (TIP, LRTP, UPWP)	Electronic and hardcopy			X

## **VI. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS**

### **PHASE I: ACTIVATION AND RELOCATION**

#### **1. Decision Process**

The Forward Pinellas Executive Director, or in their absence, a Planning Division Manager, has the authority to activate the COOP. In the event of a countywide emergency, such as a hurricane, Forward Pinellas will follow direction from the Executive Director on staffing, procurement, and continuity of operations as needed and in documented consultation with the Chair of the Board, or other members of the Executive Committee, when conditions warrant and in accordance with the Internal Control Structure Policy Manual.

#### **2. Alert, Notification, and Implementation Process**

If during work hours, and if time allows due to the nature of the event, the Forward Pinellas Executive Director will call a meeting and detail the COOP activation plan. Those not present will be notified by phone upon activation. If activation occurs after hours, each staff member will be notified by phone or e-mail by their immediate supervisor.

Employees should monitor their phones and e-mail as well as local television and radio stations, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) weather radio (for weather-related events) and related communication sources following any disaster. Employees may also tune in to Pinellas County Radio AM 940 to receive instructions from the Emergency Management Department. Employees who are unable to receive information through the information line or broadcast should report to their local fire or police department. All police department radios, except those associated with the City of Clearwater, have a Pinellas County EOC channel (EOC-A). Officers can utilize this channel to verify employee assignments. Clearwater officers should contact their city EOC via their radio system. The City EOC has a County radio to reach the County EOC.

If an emergency alert occurs during normal working hours, and time permitting, each employee will execute the necessary actions immediately. All visitors will be escorted to safety and the senior Forward Pinellas staff member in the office will refer to the staff sign-out board to account for the location of each staff member. Staff not assigned to specific preparation procedures will take appropriate action to protect their family and property. Those with extenuating circumstances requiring their prompt attention may attend to them upon approval of their supervisor. In the event of a hurricane, preparation should occur 24 to 36 hours in advance of the storm. Forward Pinellas staff members leaving the county, without prior supervisory authorization in anticipation of hurricane evacuation or COOP activation would be subject to dismissal.

### **3. Initial Emergency Procedures for Forward Pinellas Staff**

#### **a. Fire Threats**

All fire alarms should be treated as real events. Remain calm and leave the building immediately via the nearest escape route. Take your keys/phone/county ID with you as you may not be able to return to the building if there is fire damage (you should be able to do this in under three minutes).

- Do not use elevators as they might not function in a fire.
- Escort visitors out of the building as they may not be aware of exits.
- Your Fire Monitor or Office Manager will take the staff list with them to account for any staff and those out of the office at lunch or meetings.
- Close doors behind you to isolate the fire. Oxygen is fuel for the fire. If you are unable to close the doors the fire monitor will do so. Please watch this short 5 minute video on how important it is to have doors closed during a fire:  
<https://www.facebook.com/ULfirefightersafety/videos/close-before-you-doze-see-the-dramatic-life-saving-difference-a-door-can-make/151677799111677/>
- Once outside the building, proceed to the designated assembly area (see map below) and report to your supervisor/fire monitor and await further instructions.
- Do not re-enter the building until told to do so by the Fire Department, Risk Management, or Real Estate Management.



**IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY OR FIRE ALARM  
AT THE 310 COURT STREET LOCATION  
PLEASE EVACUATE NORTH ON S. OSCEOLA AVE.  
TO THE CLEARWATER CITY HALL PARKING LOT**



**WATCH FOR TRAFFIC WHEN CROSSING THE STREET**



When a fire alarm has not sounded, but a fire emergency is detected:

- Remain calm and alert co-workers and guests in the immediate area of the fire emergency.
- Locate and activate the nearest fire pull station.
- Leave the building immediately by the nearest escape route.
- Do not use the elevators.
- The Fire Monitor or Office Manager will take the staff list with them to account for staff out of the office.
- Close doors behind you to isolate the fire. If you are unable the fire monitor will do so.
- Once outside the building, proceed to the designated assembly area (see enclosed graphics for your buildings evacuation route) and report to your supervisor and await further instructions.
- Do not re-enter the building until told to do so by the Fire Department, Risk Management, or Real Estate Management.

Always remember to stay low to avoid rising superheated air that could scorch your lungs. If in a stair well, check the exit door for heat. If the door is hot, proceed to the other stairway to exit.

Because Forward Pinellas is renting space within a Pinellas County building, we must follow the county's policy with regard to the use of fire extinguishers. Per county policy, only those staff who have been trained to use fire extinguishers should use them. The two exceptions to this are if you are in immediate life-threatening danger or other staff is in immediate life-threatening danger. Remember "**PASS**," pull safety pin, aim the hose, squeeze handle and sweep the base of the fire.



## b. Bomb Threats

Every phone in the building should have a Bomb Threat Instruction card nearby. If it does not, please notify your supervisor.

- If you receive a bomb threat, pull the card out from under your phone and calmly ask the questions listed. **DO NOT PUT THE CALLER ON HOLD!**
- Discreetly notify a fellow employee of the bomb threat so they can notify your supervisor and call 911 from a different phone, then Risk Management (4646-3664) and Emergency Management (464-5550).
- The person receiving the bomb threat should never hang up the phone or make another call from that phone (this open phone line will help authorities to be able to trace the location of the call).
- The decision to evacuate will be made by the executive director of Forward Pinellas or his/her designee.
- If the order to evacuate is issued, all building occupants will report to your assigned assembly area. Take keys, phones, County IDs, purses with you.
- Supervisors/fire monitors will conduct a roll call of their personnel for accountability.
- Under NO circumstances will staff re-enter the building until instructed by the lead emergency agency in charge.

## c. Suspicious Packages

- Anyone discovering a suspicious package should call 911 and report the location of the package. If possible, take a quick picture of the package.
- The same person should then call their supervisor and inform them of the suspicious package.
- Do not touch the suspicious package!

- All radio and mobile computer transmissions, including cellular telephone calls, shall be prohibited within 500 yards of the suspected explosive device location.

#### **d. Hurricane or Storm Threats**

**Forward Pinellas staff should observe the emergency procedures described below in the event of an emergency related to a hurricane or storm threat.**

- **Assess your work area. Secure necessary files and computer equipment. Save all electronic files to the main county server or backup your files to OneDrive and/or USB flash drives. Place USB flash drives into waterproof containers, and take them with you if you are ordered to report to the alternate location.**
- **If you have any unprotected work considered important to your job or task that may be needed for future reference, it should be labeled and placed in the 2nd floor printer area or interior cubicle. If it is crucial to your daily functions, take your work with you if you are ordered to report to the alternate location.**
- **If you are in a window office, disconnect the computer and place in the 2nd floor printer area or an interior cubicle. Also, tape all openings on file cabinets to help minimize wind and water damage should the windows be blown out. Close your office door.**
- **After you have secured your work area and moved your computer equipment into the interior printer area or interior cubicles designated for computer equipment storage, you may be needed to assist in securing other equipment and/or files, etc. Clerical staff will secure the main Forward Pinellas file cabinets containing the official records and Forward Pinellas operating financial account information.**

#### **4. Contingencies for Staff Shortages**

It is not imperative for Forward Pinellas staff to be present in the office to maintain the essential operations of the agency. However, some staff should continue to be present in the office for purposes of conducting routine functions such as to pay invoices and sign checks, handle mail deliveries, greet office guests and to respond to calls. Forward Pinellas shall ensure at least one staff member is present in the office in situations when workers are directed or encouraged to telework.

#### **5. Health Emergency Procedures for Pandemics**

##### **a. Social Distancing Strategies**

Social distancing is a public health safety intervention used to reduce the likelihood of transmitting communicable disease. It involves minimizing exposure to infected individuals by avoiding large public gathering venues, adhering to spacing requirements in the workplace and following proper personal hygiene practices.

## **b. Initial Screening of Employees**

- An initial screening of employees should consist of the questions below.
  - Do you have a fever?
  - Do you have a worsening cough or flu-like symptoms?
  - Have you traveled internationally in the last 14 days?
  - Have you been in close contact with someone, including health care workers, confirmed to have the coronavirus disease?

Direct employees who answer positive to any of the above questions to work from home. Employees who have symptoms of acute respiratory illness are recommended to stay home and not come to work until they are free of fever (100.4° F [37.8° C] or greater using an oral thermometer), signs of a fever, and any other symptoms for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing or other symptom-altering medicines (e.g. cough suppressants). Employees should notify their supervisor and stay home if they are sick.

- Employees who appear to have acute respiratory illness symptoms (i.e. cough, shortness of breath) upon arrival to work or become sick during the day should be separated from other employees and be sent home immediately. Sick employees should cover their noses and mouths with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (or an elbow or shoulder if no tissue is available).
- Employees who are scheduled to attend meetings at locations outside the office will be encouraged to attend and/or participate by phone if possible.
- Employees not required to work in the office will be encouraged to work from home as necessary.
- If warranted by the threat of the virus spreading in Pinellas County and as advised by the Pinellas County Emergency Management Department, Forward Pinellas will postpone all meetings until the threat has passed and it is deemed safe to return to normal operations.

## **c. Additional Precautions for Pandemics**

- Emphasize respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene by all employees
  - Place posters that encourage staying home when sick, cough and sneeze etiquette, and hand hygiene at the entrance to your workplace and in other workplace areas where they are likely to be seen.
  - Provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles for use by employees.
  - Instruct employees to clean their hands often with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60-95% alcohol or wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Soap and water should be used preferentially if

hands are visibly dirty.

- Provide soap and water and alcohol-based hand rubs in the workplace. Ensure that adequate supplies are maintained. Place hand rubs in multiple locations or in conference rooms to encourage hand hygiene.

- **Perform routine environmental cleaning**

- Routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, countertops, and doorknobs. Use the cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas and follow the directions on the label.
- Provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces (for example, doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks) can be wiped down by employees before each use.
- Employees who are well but who have a sick family member at home with should notify their supervisor and refer to Centers of Disease Control (CDC) guidance for how to conduct a risk assessment of their potential exposure.
- If an employee is confirmed to have a virus confirmed to be part of a pandemic, the employee should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to the virus in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Employees exposed to a co-worker with confirmed pandemic-related virus should refer to CDC guidance for how to conduct a risk assessment of their potential exposure.

## 6. In response to non-hurricane or storm threats:

- Save documents that are critical to daily functions to a USB drive or organization OneDrive account.
- Secure desktop work station, if employee has one.
- If assigned a laptop, employees must take the laptop and charging cable home with them when leaving the building.
- Sign out on the staff sign-out board located in office.
- Maintain consistent communication with direct supervisor regarding alternative work locations and status.

## 7. Leadership

### a. Orders of Succession

The order of succession, in terms of supervisory responsibility for the Forward Pinellas office during activation of the COOP, is shown below.

- Whit Blanton, Forward Pinellas Executive Director
- Rodney Chatman, Forward Pinellas Division Manager

- Chelsea Favero, Forward Pinellas Planning Manager

If the senior ranking staff member is incapacitated or out of the area at activation or during the plan implementation, the next ranking staff member shall assume responsibility for implementing and fulfilling the COOP's objectives. The primary method of contact shall be via telephone. Should an emergency situation necessitate other employees being unavailable for duty, the absolute minimal staff required to continue operations are currently designed as Whit Blanton, Chelsea Favero, Jared Austin, Rebecca Stysly and Maria Kelly.

#### **b. Delegations of Authority**

The Forward Pinellas Executive Director shall remain in authority unless incapacitated or out of the area. The Executive Director may appoint a successor, or if unable to do so, the next person in succession shall assume responsibility.

#### **c. Devolution**

The primary function of Forward Pinellas is countywide land use and transportation planning. Staff are not engaged in the physical construction or day-to-day operations of transportation facilities. However, should an emergency occur requiring activation of the COOP, Forward Pinellas' planning priorities are to provide support necessary to maintain the existing transportation system and for payment to those associated with Forward Pinellas agreements and contracts.

In the event of a worst-case scenario in which the Forward Pinellas offices are completely destroyed and/or the entire leadership is incapacitated, Forward Pinellas functions may be handled at a lower staff level. In the event of total destruction of the Forward Pinellas offices, the Florida Department of Transportation and Federal Highway Administration have copies of the agency's major planning documents, including the Long Range Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program, Unified Planning Work Program, grant invoicing packages, consultant contracts and Joint Participation Agreements should it become necessary for re-establishment of Forward Pinellas operations in an alternate location. Electronic files containing the Planning Council's main planning documents are maintained by the Pinellas County Business Technology Services (BTS) unit and are accessible should the need arise to re-establish the land use functions of Forward Pinellas after a disaster. The agency's banks, BB&T and Regions, the United States Treasury Department and the State of Florida Office of the Comptroller have account information on file should a situation arise where neither Forward Pinellas nor a county authority is available to access the agency's account.

## **PHASE II: ALTERNATE TELECOMMUTING AND/OR FACILITY OPERATIONS**

### **1. Alternate Telecommuting Operations (in Conjunction with BTS)**





### **PHASE III: RECONSTITUTION**

#### **Returning to normal operations**

In the event of total destruction of the Forward Pinellas offices, staff will be assigned a new location by the Pinellas County Real Estate Management Department. A pre-assigned location has yet to be determined, but it is anticipated Forward Pinellas operations would be housed in an existing County facility. In the event of an emergency where staff is unable to report to any office location, employees may work remotely from home, upon direction from the Executive Director. After the emergency has passed, Forward Pinellas staff shall contact their supervisors for instructions on when and where to report to duty.

## VII. COOP TEST

The COOP will be examined on an annual basis by June 1. This will include a test of the COOP Training and Exercise Plan. This is to ensure that the plan can be implemented effectively while allowing staff to make adjustments to the COOP where needed. Each staff member will identify their critical and necessary files and documents, be familiarized with their responsibilities in carrying out the plan's procedures during an emergency and equipment will be maintained in a constant state of readiness. Batteries and supplies will be checked. A test of alert and notification procedures will be conducted.

The COOP will be maintained and updated by Forward Pinellas as necessary following the annual examination. The personnel and emergency telephone lists will be reviewed and updated each month. Emergency equipment such as flashlights will be checked each year by June 1.

## VIII. Operational Checklists and Contacts

1. Secure workstation. Place necessary computer CDs and USB flash drives in one of the four secure Forward Pinellas ammunition canisters located on the 2nd floor. These four canisters will be located in the storage closet. Take canister to the alternate location if an evacuation is ordered.
2. Secure the department laptop computers. Bring to the alternate location.
3. Secure personnel roster and phone list. Bring to the alternate location.
4. Secure emergency calling directory. Bring to the alternate location.
5. Secure emergency operation records. Bring to the alternate location.
6. Secure predetermined critical files necessary to carry out Forward Pinellas activities. Bring to the alternate location.

### EOC Facility Information

10750 Ulmerton Road  
Largo, FL 33778  
(727) 453-3637

### Transportation Agency Emergency Phone List

Florida Department of Transportation District 7  
Jensen Hackett  
(813) 975-6427  
[jensen.hackett@dot.state.fl.gov](mailto:jensen.hackett@dot.state.fl.gov)

Federal Highway Administration  
Teresa Parker  
[Teresa.parker@dot.gov](mailto:Teresa.parker@dot.gov)  
407-867-6415

Federal Transit Administration  
Christopher White 404-865-5619

Christopher.white@fta.dot.gov

*Note: Contact list of Forward Pinellas staff members is maintained on file in the agency offices and is also available to staff via online platforms.*