**MEMORANDUM**

**Office of Administrative Hearings**

**Limited Office Access Extended through May 31, 2020**

From: John Mann, Chief Administrative Law Judge

Date: April 10, 2020

Re: Office of Administrative Hearings – Response to Covid-19 Outbreak

In an effort to help slow the spread of COVID-19 in Oregon and protect employees and the public, the Office of Administrative Hearings changed the way it provides services at its offices starting March 24, 2020. Our hearing offices remain open and can be reached by phone and email during regular business hours. However, in-person interactions between staff and the public, including hearings, are by appointment only. We continue to hold telephone hearings as scheduled.

On March 24, 2020, I announced that the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) would substantially reduce the number of in-person hearings that we would conduct through the end of April 2020. However, as the situation has continued to evolve, it has become necessary to extend these restrictions in order to promote social distancing. Therefore, the current restrictions on in-person hearings will remain in effect through May 31, 2020.

In-person hearings will be converted to phone hearings to the extent allowed by law, so long as a phone hearing is feasible. Hearings that are lengthy or document intensive are generally not suitable for telephone hearings. In such cases, the OAH may need to postpone the hearings. For hearings that are legally required to be in person and which cannot be postponed, or for in-person hearings where a party would be substantially prejudiced by undue delay, the OAH will make every effort possible to conduct the hearing as scheduled. Parties who currently have hearings scheduled with the OAH and wish to request that the hearing be postponed or converted to a phone hearing should contact our office as soon as possible.

For those limited number of in-person hearings that cannot be postponed or converted to phone hearings, all hearing participants will be required to adhere to principals of social distancing. This includes maintaining a six foot distance between people at all times and avoiding all physical contact.

We are continuing to monitor the situation and may take further steps to limit or postpone hearings should it become necessary to protect the public and our employees. We regret any inconvenience or delay occasioned by these actions. But we are committed to taking whatever steps that we can to help protect the public from the further spread of this disease.

Sincerely,

John Mann

Chief Administrative Law Judge

Office of Administrative Hearings