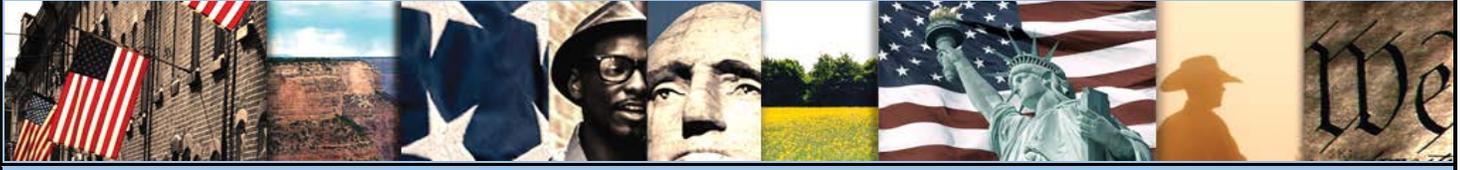




Homeland Security

Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties Newsletter Vol. 10, #7 | April 2020

The Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL) supports the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) as it secures the nation while preserving individual liberty, fairness, and equality under the law.



CRCL Operations During COVID-19 Response

Per guidance from the [U.S. Office of Personnel Management](#) in response to COVID-19, CRCL is operating under telework flexibilities while continuing to serve and support the public. As a result, mail operations may be impacted and our response to mailed letters may be delayed. If you wish to file a complaint, the best method of submission at this time is via email to: CRCLCompliance@hq.dhs.gov. CRCL staff will continue to monitor this email address, and our toll-free hotline for your questions at: 1-866-644-8360, TTY: 1-866-644-8361. For additional details on how to file a civil rights complaint, visit: <https://www.dhs.gov/file-civil-rights-complaint>.

Civil Society Consultation for International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights

Recently, CRCL Deputy Officer for Programs and Compliance Peter Mina participated in a civil society consultation on the U.S. Government’s draft report under the treaty reporting process for the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The ICCPR is an international human rights treaty that was adopted in 1966 by the U.N. General Assembly and ratified by the United States in 1992. As a State Party, the United States is required to file periodic reports every 4-5 years with the U.N. Human Rights Committee describing the U.S. Government’s implementation of its ICCPR obligations. Civil society consultations are an important part of the international human rights treaty reporting cycles as they help the U.S. Government identify issues that can be addressed in the periodic treaty report.

The roundtable discussion was hosted by the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor and occurred as a teleconference due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Approximately 60 non-governmental organizations participated on the call. Deputy Officer Mina described CRCL’s role in the Department and spoke in particular about CRCL’s policymaking and oversight role related to border and asylum policies, immigration detention, and screening and vetting.

This past January, Deputy Officer Mina also participated in a separate civil society consultation hosted by the Department of State under the reporting process for the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). The UPR provides every U.N. Member State with the opportunity to review and assess its human rights record based on human rights obligations and commitments under the U.N. Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and other human rights instruments. The U.S. Government was scheduled to present on its report at the U.N. this May, however, the session has been [postponed](#) until November 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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DHS Announces \$10 Million in FY20 Funding Availability for Targeted Violence Terrorism Prevention Grant Programs

DHS is making \$10 million available to help local communities more effectively combat terrorism and targeted violence across the United States. The \$10 million appropriated by Congress under the Fiscal Year 2020 Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention (TVTP) Grant Program will support the development of local prevention capabilities at a time when DHS is observing an uptick in online efforts for terrorism recruitment and radicalization from a variety of sectors. The application period will close on May 29, 2020. Applicants should consult the [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) for specific information about the process. For more information, please visit: <https://www.dhs.gov/tvtpgrants>.

Acting Secretary Chad Wolf Statement on Delaying the REAL ID Enforcement Deadline

“Due to circumstances resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and the national emergency declaration, the Department of Homeland Security, as directed by President Donald J. Trump, is extending the REAL ID enforcement deadline beyond the current October 1, 2020 deadline. I have determined that states require a twelve-month delay and that the new deadline for REAL ID enforcement is October 1, 2021. DHS will publish a notice of the new deadline in the Federal Register in the coming days.

“The federal, state and local response to the spread of the Coronavirus here in the United States necessitates a delay in this deadline. Our state and local partners are working tirelessly with the Administration to flatten the curve and, therefore, we want to remove any impediments to response and recovery efforts. States across the country are temporarily closing or restricting access to DMVs. This action will preclude millions of people from applying for and receiving their REAL ID. Extending the deadline will also allow the Department to work with Congress to implement needed changes to expedite the issuance of REAL IDs once the current health crisis concludes.

“Protecting both the health and national security of the American people continues to be the top priority for the President of the United States and the Department of Homeland Security.” *Read [FAQs on the REAL ID](#), translated into multiple languages.*

Be Like Mike: If you’ve been to an area with current travel restrictions due to the coronavirus pandemic, you can still come home anytime. You’ll just follow these guidelines (click on the image to view the video).



Thank a Truck Driver and a CBP Officer: Are your grocery store shelves full? Thank a truck driver and a CBP officer! In just a week of restrictions, CBP reported a 13 percent increase in commercial traffic across our borders, while travel plummeted. DHS is keeping our vital supply chain open (click on the image to view the video).

Acting Secretary Chad Wolf Statement on Non-Essential Travel

“In close collaboration, the US, Mexico, and Canada have each agreed to extend restrictions on non-essential travel across their shared borders for 30 additional days. As President Trump stated last week, border control, travel restrictions and other limitations remain critical to slowing the spread and allowing the phased opening of the country.”

Message from CISA to Faith-Based Leaders on Protective Resources During COVID-19

Dear Members of the Faith-Based Community:

The ongoing coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has temporarily altered our daily activities. People are rightly practicing social distancing to limit community spread, in line with the President’s Coronavirus Guidelines for America.



Many houses of worship have also suspended or significantly reduced services to avoid mass gatherings. Although many people undoubtedly continue to practice their faith, including through remote services and prayer, most are inevitably eager to return to normalcy and join their fellow congregants in practicing their faiths. The American people are resilient, and we will achieve this goal soon.

When you begin efforts to reconstitute services and welcome congregants back into your houses of worship, please also review your security plans and ensure procedures are in place to protect your facilities and visitors. Although there are no imminent or credible threats at this time, there has been an increase in online hate speech intended to encourage violence or use the ongoing situation as an excuse to spread hatred.

Additionally, stressors caused by the pandemic may contribute to an individual’s decision to commit an attack or influence their target of choice. Again, we have no information to suggest such attacks are imminent or even likely, instead we are looking to provide you with useful information for planning for restoration of normal operations, whenever that may be.

As I mentioned in my February 2019 letter to the Faith-Based Community, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) within the U.S. Department of Homeland Security is committed to supporting your efforts to maintain safe and secure houses of worship and related facilities while sustaining an open and welcoming environment. In partnership with entities such as the DHS Center for Faith and Opportunity Initiatives and the Faith-Based Information Sharing and Analysis Organization, we provide resources that assist in securing physical and cyber infrastructure.

Through CISA’s Hometown Security program (<https://www.cisa.gov/hometown-security>), a multitude of resources are available to support risk mitigation decision-making. These resources include training, tools, exercises, and other materials focused on a wide range of threats (e.g., bombing, active shooter, vehicle ramming, etc.) and other resources relating to behavioral indicator detection. Also, CISA has a nationwide presence with our field personnel, including Protective Security Advisors, that can help you enhance your security through assessments, exercises, training, and other efforts. To find out more about your regional CISA team, please contact CISAServiceDesk@cisa.dhs.gov.

Thank you again for everything you do to champion the American people’s Constitutional First Amendment rights, as well as your leadership in keeping our houses of worship safe and secure. You have a committed partner in DHS who is steadfast in ensuring you have the resources to enhance your security programs.

Sincerely,
Brian Harrell, Assistant Director for Infrastructure Security
Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency

Accessible COVID-19 Resources and Materials

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides [helpful resources to assist individuals in protecting themselves](#), which include:

- a series of fact sheets, posters, and other aids available in multiple languages: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/factsheets.html>
- a [playlist of videos available in American Sign Language](#) (ASL):
 - 10 Things You Can Do to Manage COVID-19 at Home
 - Symptoms of Coronavirus 2019
 - COVID-19 Prevention Tips in ASL
 - What Older Adults Need to Know About COVID-19
 - What is My Risk for COVID-19

Among Other Activities, DHS Initiating Crucial Research to Mitigate COVID-19

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Science and Technology Directorate (S&T) is conducting ongoing research that will help scientists better understand the coronavirus that causes the disease known as COVID-19, and methods to prevent its spread. In the Trump Administration's whole of government effort, this work is being done at the [National Biodefense Analysis and Countermeasures Center](#) (NBACC) laboratory in cooperation with the DHS Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction Office. As results become available, NBACC will provide updates on their findings to DHS and response agencies, especially those that may immediately impact efforts to mitigate transmission.

“With this critical research, we are advancing the country's top priority in helping to stop the spread of COVID-19,” said William N. Bryan, DHS Senior Official Performing the Duties of the Under Secretary for Science and Technology. “This will help us understand many of the factors that influence the persistence of the virus on surfaces or in the air, and what methods are most effective for disinfecting potentially contaminated surfaces.”

There is currently only limited information available about the virus, so researchers at the NBACC are working very aggressively to answer the many questions experts have about its survivability and transmission. Using the lab's unique capabilities, the researchers are evaluating the impact of a range of conditions, like temperature and humidity, to determine the virus's survivability in the air, in respiratory fluids and on various types of surfaces.

The results of this work will provide essential information to protect those responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, including first responders and health care providers, as well as provide best practices for individuals to reduce potential for contamination. A disinfectant study will also provide information on the most effective materials to clean surfaces to rid them of the virus.

NBACC has a unique combination of capabilities in Virology and Aerobiology that operate together at high biocontainment levels, and its aerosol scientists can develop unique solutions to address complex questions, such as those posed during the COVID-19 situation. NBACC's established ability to evaluate the stability of viruses and the effectiveness of decontamination methods previously enabled it to provide actionable information in mitigating spread of the [Ebola](#) virus.

NBACC was established specifically to conduct research for responses to biological events, to characterize emerging or novel biothreats, and develop response tools and information that enables effective responses and mitigation techniques to stem the impact of such events.

FCC Proposes to Make Video Programming Accessible to Blind or Visually Impaired Individuals

The Federal Communications Commission has proposed to expand its video description rules to ensure that more video programming is accessible to individuals who are blind or visually impaired, helping them be more informed and entertained by television programming. Video description inserts audio that describes a program's key visual elements in the natural pauses in dialogue. The Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010 required the Commission to adopt rules requiring certain television broadcast stations and multichannel video programming distributors to provide video description for a portion of the video programming that they offer to consumers on television.

The Notice of Proposed Rulemaking proposes to expand the scope of these regulations to an additional 10 designated market areas each year for four years, beginning on January 1, 2021. Thus, the Commission tentatively concludes that video description requirements should apply to markets 61 through 100. Read more here: <https://www.fcc.gov/document/fcc-seeks-expand-video-description-visually-impaired-americans>.

CRCL on the Road, April*

April 22 – Chicago, Illinois

CRCL convened its regular community engagement roundtable virtually with diverse ethnic and community-based stakeholders and organizations.

April 30 – Denver, Colorado

CRCL convened its regular community engagement roundtable virtually with diverse ethnic and community-based stakeholders and organizations.

April 29 – Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota

CRCL convened its regular community engagement roundtable virtually with diverse ethnic and community-based stakeholders and organizations.

*Following guidance from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) to exercise social distancing, our Community Engagement team will continue to carry out our mission using various virtual and telephonic tools during this national public health emergency. While our team maintains constant communication with federal, state, local, and civil society stakeholders across the country, we encourage anyone who needs to contact us to do so via email to: CommunityEngagement@hq.dhs.gov. Thank you for your flexibility and understanding during this time.

Additional information, and contacting us

The goal of this periodic newsletter is to inform members of the public about the activities of the DHS Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, including: how to file complaints; ongoing and upcoming projects; opportunities to offer comments and feedback; etc. We distribute our newsletters via our stakeholder email list and make them available to community groups for redistribution. Issues of the newsletter can be accessed online at: www.dhs.gov/crcl-newsletter.

If you would like to receive this newsletter via email, want to request back issues, or have other comments or questions, please let us know by emailing crcloutreach@dhs.gov. For more information, including how to make a civil rights or civil liberties complaint about DHS activities, visit: www.dhs.gov/crcl.

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