Guide to the
Ames Research Center Response to COVID-19 Collection
ARC20.08

NASA Ames History Archives
NASA Ames Research Center

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Ames Research Center Response to COVID-19 Collection

Collection Number: ARC20.08

Creator: Ames Research Center

Dates: Inclusive: January 9 - December 18, 2020

Extent: Volume: 150 digital items, 440 Megabytes

Repository: NASA Ames History Archives, Moffett Field, California 94035

Abstract:
This collection provides insight into NASA Ames Research Center's response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Communications documentation captures how Ames management adapted to challenging conditions, and gives a view into the workforce culture during lockdown (includes circulars; InsideAmes website postings; email correspondence; town hall meeting transcripts; and an employee survey and results). Other documentation shows how research scientists and high-performance computing facilities supported efforts to study the virus and seek solutions and tools to combat it (includes email correspondence; website postings; meeting reminders, agendas, and summaries; symposium agendas and presentations; informational sheets; and exposure assessment tool resources). The capture of documentation for this collection is ongoing and new materials will be added annually. All of the material in this collection is in digital form.

Administrative Information

Access: Collection is open for research. Portions may be subject to restrictions.

Publication Rights: Copyright does not apply to United States government records. For non-governmental material, researcher must contact the original creator.

Languages and Scripts: All records are in English.

Preferred Citation:
Expanded:
NASA Ames History Archives, NASA Ames Research Center. Moffett Field, California. ARC20.08, Ames Research Center Response to COVID-19 Collection, [Container number] : [Folder number]. [Identification of item]. [Date, if available].
Abbreviated:
NASA ARC. ARC20.08, [Container number] : [Folder number]. [Identification of item]. [Date, if available].

Administrative History

This artificial collection is compiled by the Ames Research Center Response to COVID-19 Data Collection Project. The goal of the project is to broadly capture how the center evolved and changed in its response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The project team consists of Ames archivists April D. Gage and Danielle K. Lopez, and historian James N. Anderson.

In December 2019, a novel coronavirus causing COVID-19 emerged in China. The spread of the virus reached the level of global pandemic within months. By the end of 2020, almost 2 million people worldwide had died due to COVID. Over 300,000 of those deaths occurred in the United States. Responses to the pandemic varied by location, taking into account specific local, state, and federal guidelines that were developed.

NASA Ames Research Center in Santa Clara County, California, became the first NASA center with a confirmed case of COVID. The pandemic affected the day-to-day lives of everyone at the center. Mandatory telework quickly became the new mode for work as almost all social interactions that had previously occurred in person shifted to some form of remote and digitally mediated interaction. While mission critical activities were allowed to return to onsite work after evaluation and approval of return-to-work plans that were specifically tailored for selected laboratories and research groups, most of the workforce remained exclusively engaged in telework beyond 2020.

Timeline

January 29, 2020: The first announcement in an Ames centerwide communication regarding the coronavirus notes that cases have been identified in travelers from China arriving in the United States, but the extent of person-to-person spread outside of China remains unclear. The Public Health Officer of Santa Clara County issues a letter regarding the coronavirus, stating that there is not yet any evidence that the virus is present in the community. The letter advises the use of a mask for anyone experiencing respiratory symptoms for the protection of others.

February 3, 2020: The County of Santa Clara Public Health Department announces confirmation from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that two cases of coronavirus are present in the county.

February 4, 2020: NASA announces that employees and contractors returning from travel to China will not be allowed onto NASA centers until after fourteen days of observation and self-care have expired and they are determined not to be infectious.

March 2, 2020: Ames announces a liberal telework policy for employees until further notice as well as the creation of a situation response team working closely with NASA Headquarters.
March 6, 2020: NASA conducts an agency-wide telework day to test its capabilities, resources, and preparedness for large-scale teleworking.

March 8, 2020: The first confirmed case of coronavirus at Ames moves the center to mandatory telework under Stage 3 of NASA's Response Framework.

March 16, 2020: Santa Clara County announces (together with surrounding Bay Area counties and the City of Berkeley) a shelter-at-home order to last for three weeks beginning March 17.

March 17, 2020: The second confirmed case of coronavirus at Ames is announced. Ames moves to Stage 4 of NASA's Response Framework, placing all personnel on mandatory telework with the exception of those required to maintain the safety and security of the center. All previously approved exceptions for work onsite are rescinded and new approvals are required to gain access to the center.

June 8, 2020: Ames transitions from Stage 4 to Stage 3, where it remains for the remainder of 2020.

Scope and Content

This collection provides insight into Ames Research Center's response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, with a focus on two main areas. First, communications documentation shows how center leaders handled the response and provides a view into the workforce culture during the first ten-months the center was on lockdown in mandatory telecommute status for nonessential workers (Series 1). Second, other documentation shows how the center's technical facilities and staff supported efforts to study the virus and seek solutions and tools to combat it (Series 2).

Files in Series 1 include both center and contractor management communications to staff and the public that show how Ames adapted to changing and challenging conditions to keep the center functioning, while focusing on ensuring the safety, health, and wellbeing of the workforce. These communications also provide a glimpse into how workplace culture began to change during the long months of mandatory telework, when the bulk of employees shifted from face-to-face activities to digital communications and collaborative platforms. Of note are regular email messages from the KBR Fully Integrated Lifecycle Mission Support Services (FILMSS) Contract I Program Manager Rick S. Thompson to FILMSS staff. Starting on March 8, the first weekday of mandatory telework status, Thompson began disseminating daily emails to staff. These messages, which include a mix of both formal and personal communications, give insight into the culture of a small segment of the Ames workforce and how one senior manager endeavored to provide stability, emotional support, and foster a sense of community during this difficult time.

Materials in Series 2 document how Ames responded as a research center by bringing its expertise and technical facilities to bear on supporting research efforts to study and understand the virus, and ultimately identify solutions to curb or eradicate the spread. This includes both forming an international research team of scientists and lending supercomputing support to help accelerate scientific investigations. The bulk of this series
comprises COVID-19 International Research Team (COV-IRT) documentation created and accumulated by Afshin Beheshti, Bioinformatician and Principal Investigator from Ames and Visiting Researcher at Broad Institute, as well as copies of the COV-IRT website pages and copies of tools developed by the team. The COV-IRT effort was initiated by Beheshti and co-founded by Beheshti, Todd Treangen (Assistant Professor in the department of Computer Science at Rice University), and Krista Ternus (Genomics Specialist in Biological Sciences at Signature Science, LLC). This large, multidisciplinary team of international researchers began working together as an open science collaboration group to study the virus, understand how it impacts the host, and seek pathways to potential therapeutic options. They also developed free, publicly available tools and resources to provide accurate information and help mitigate the spread of the disease. This series also includes an informational bulletin posted online about Ames providing worldwide access to its high-performance computing resources in the Advanced Supercomputing Facility to support efforts such as COV-IRT.

Document and still image formats: Portable Document Format (PDF), Portable Network Graphics (PNG), Microsoft Excel Open XML Format Spreadsheet (XLSX), and PowerPoint Open XML Format presentation file (PPTX). (XLSX and PPTX files are also provided in PDF format). Dates appended to filenames are expressed as yyyyymmdd.

**System of Arrangement**

This collection is arranged in two series, chronologically, by topic.

Series I: Communications
- Subseries I.1: Center Communications
- Subseries I.2: Contractor Staff Communications

Series II: Response as a Research Center

**Series Descriptions**

**Series I: Communications, January 29 - December 18, 2020, 42 items.**

Subseries 1. Center Communications, January 29, 2020 - December 14, 2020
Center communications, issued in circulars and postings on the Inside Ames internal website "COVID-19 Information and Updates" page, comprise a sampling of announcements, guidelines, facility and services status updates, face mask requirements, cases and contact tracing (anonymized), wellness campaign efforts, transcripts of "Ask the Center Director" virtual town hall meetings with staff; and return to onsite work (RTOW) framework and guidance documents. Also included is a timeline and index of Ames Centerwide announcements and Astrogram newsletter articles organized by date of issue.

Subseries 2: Contractor Staff Communications, March 9, 2020 - December 18, 2020
Center contractor communications mainly comprise regular email messages and informational attachments from KBR FILMSS Contract Program Manager Richard S. Thompson to his staff. In addition to containing critical information, policy guidance, and status updates, Thompson's messages provide personal insights and moral support, and were used to disseminate information and photographs from group activities, such as "FILMSS Foodie Friday" photograph collages of various dishes team members cooked at home each week. The individual messages with attachments are compiled into ten files, one per month from March to December. Also included are staff photographs of inspiring outdoor scenes; a
digital card (sent to Thompson on July 1) signed by individual FILMSS employees thanking him for his regular messages and leadership during the mandatory telework period; and a FILMSS RTOW staff survey, survey responses, and summary presentation delivered to staff in a company town hall on May 11.

**Series II: Response as a Research Center, March 18 - December 18, 2020, 109 items.**

This series contains summary information about the center's response to the pandemic, including the use of high-performance computing resources in NASA's Advanced Supercomputing Division at Ames to support efforts to work toward finding solutions for the pandemic and the COV-IRT effort (a page from the agency website), as well as COV-IRT documentation, including: charter; logo; member list with photographs; brief background information provided by Beheshti; weekly meeting reminders, agendas, and summaries; copies of Beheshti's weekly activity reports summarizing his COVID-19 work and all activity with the COV-IRT team; flyers, agendas, and copies of Beheshti's presentations for the first two COV-IRT symposiums; information from the COV-IRT website about the MaskCheck application developed by the team to help ensure compliance; and website descriptions and copies of versions of the Exposure Assessment Tool developed by the team.

**Indexing Terms**

The following terms may be used to index this collection.

**Corporate Name**  
Ames Research Center  
COVID-19 International Research Team (COV-IRT)  
KBR Incorporated

**Personal Name**  
Beheshti, Afshin  
Thompson, Richard S.  
Tu, Eugene L.

**Subjects**  
Coronavirus Pandemic  
COVID-19 (Disease)  
COVID-19 (Disease)--Treatment  
Emerging Infectious Diseases--Treatment--Congresses  
High Performance Computing  
NASA Fully Integrated Lifecycle Mission Support Services Contract

**Related Collections**  
Public Affairs Office Collection, AFS1380  
Astrogram Collection, AFS1380
Acronyms

ARC   Ames Research Center
COV-IRT COVID-19 International Research Team
FILMSS Fully Integrated Lifecycle Mission Support Services
HPC   High-Performance Computing
NAS   NASA Advanced Supercomputing Division
NASA  National Aeronautics and Space Administration
RTOW  Return to Work

Container List

I_Communications
II_ResponseAsResearchCenter
inv.txt

./I_Communications:
I1_CenterCommunications
I2_ContractorStaffCommunications

./I_Communications/I1_CenterCommunications:
FromInsideAmesInternalWebsite_Restricted
Index_COVID19CenterCommunications.pdf
Index_COVID19CenterCommunications.xlsx

./I_Communications/I1_CenterCommunications/FromInsideAmesInternalWebsite_Restricted:
AskCenterDirectorTownHallMeetings
CasesAtAmesTable
Covid19_InformationandUpdates_accessed20210125.pdf
EmployeeWellnessCampaign_accessed20200125.pdf
FacemaskUseRequirements_Ames_accessed20210125.pdf
Facilities-ServicesStatusesDuringCovid_accessed20210125.pdf
ReturnToOnsiteWork

./I_Communications/I1_CenterCommunications/FromInsideAmesInternalWebsite_Restricted/
AskCenterDirectorTownHallMeetings:
AskCenterDirector_20200327_1transcript_20200511.pdf
AskCenterDirector_20200327_2AdditionalAnswers_20200511.pdf
AskCenterDirector_20200428_1transcript_20200511.pdf
AskCenterDirector_20200428_2AdditionalAnswers_20200511.pdf
AskCenterDirector_20201027_1transcript_20210111.pdf
AskCenterDirector_20201027_2AdditionalAnswers_20210111.pdf