

**Plant Protection and Quarantine
Protocol for Simultaneous Communication with
State Plant Health Directors (SPHD) and
State Plant Regulatory Officials (SPRO)**

Protocol

Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) developed this simultaneous communication protocol to ensure that important information intended for national or multi-state distribution is shared in a timely manner with State Plant Health Directors (SPHDs) and State Plant Regulatory Officials (SPROs). This protocol applies to all core functional areas within PPQ.

When information needs to be shared with SPHDs and SPROs, it should be communicated simultaneously. SPHDs should follow up with their State counterparts to discuss the information and determine whether any action, individually or together, is needed.

Exception

- For situations where information is still being gathered or policy and operational planning is still underway, internal discussions with SPHDs or discussions with a representative group of SPHDs and SPROs may be necessary to finalize the information or plans. In these situations, be clear that the purpose of the discussion is to gather input and feedback. When selecting SPROs to participate in such a discussion, keep in mind that States not directly affected by a situation may still be interested or have valuable perspective to offer.

Exceptions should be rare. PPQ will consider what information can and should be communicated in these situations. At minimum, PPQ should let SPHDs and SPROs know that we are aware of the issue and assessing the situation to determine our approach.

If you need assistance, contact the PPQ State Liaison, Tracy Svalina at (240)357-6589 or by email at Tracy.L.Svalina@usda.gov.

Emailing SPHDs and SPROs

PPQ has an email distribution list for SPHDs (PPQOPSSPHDALL@aphis.usda.gov) that is maintained by Field Operations. Similarly, the National Plant Board (NPB) maintains an email distribution list that reaches all of its members - npb@nationalplantboard.org. Be aware, that *the NPB address is moderated and there is a list of approved PPQ senders*. This means that any message sent to the email list will be reviewed before being passed through to the membership. While most messages are reviewed very quickly, there can be delays.

To avoid delays that could result from using the NPB's moderated email address, PPQ has provided to the NPB a list of PPQ employees who send recurring or frequent messages to SPHDs and SPROs simultaneously. These messages include SPRO letters, critical issue updates, meeting notices, and other similar communications. Authorized

individuals can use the NPB group address without being moderated by the NPB, ensuring that messages will be received simultaneously by SPHDs and SPROs.

If you are not an authorized sender and need to communicate simultaneously with SPHDs and SPROs, please clear your message through your chain of command and then send it to PPQ State Liaison who will send on your behalf. If you need to send recurring communications to the NPB and wish to be added to the authorized sender list, send a request, along with a justification and sample email, to PPQ State Liaison at Tracy.L.Svalina@usda.gov.

Background

PPQ established its first simultaneous communication protocol in 2009. The protocol significantly improved timely and efficient communications and resulted in fewer concerns from State cooperators. The 2009 protocol was revised in 2015 and again in 2017 to reflect PPQ's current organizational structure and available methods of communication. It was updated to reflect the new PPQ State Liaison in 2023.

PPQ safeguards U.S. agriculture and natural resources and facilitates the safe trade of agricultural products. NPB is a national organization that provides representation for each of the regional plant boards and fosters effective and harmonized plant health programs across States. They play a key role in discussions around principles, policies, and methods to support plant health.

PPQ and the NPB have a longstanding and productive partnership. In PPQ, the SPHDs play a vital role in ensuring that policies are carried out, regulations are appropriately administered, and operations are conducted efficiently and effectively. The SPRO plays an equivalent role for the States. As partners, it is important for the SPHD and SPRO to share a common understanding of national regulations, policies, and operations. Ensuring that SPHDs and SPROs receive timely, high-quality information and guidance gives them what they need to have critical conversations in support of successful programs.

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