

COUNTY OF SUFFOLK



STEVEN BELLONE
SUFFOLK COUNTY EXECUTIVE

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

GREGSON H. PIGOTT, MD, MPH
Commissioner

TO: All EMS Providers and Firefighters in Suffolk County
All Ambulance Services and Fire Departments in Suffolk County

FROM: Nathaniel Bialek, BS, EMT-P, CIC, CCHP *NB*
Director, EMS & Public Health
Emergency Preparedness

DATE: March 23, 2020

RE: COVID-19 EMS Provider Exposure Recommendations

The New York State Department of Health, Bureau of Emergency Medical Services and Trauma Systems (NYS DOH-BEMS&TS) has released recommendations and guidance that directly address and affect EMS agencies and how they may adjust staffing and monitoring for providers that may have been exposed to COVID-19 patients.

The NYS DOH-BEMS&TS and Suffolk County Department of Health Services, Division of EMS recommends the following:

DAILY MONITORING AND RISK REDUCTION:

Please refer to NYS DOH-BEMS&TS Policies 20-02 and 20-07 for the following risk reduction procedures:

1. **ALL AGENCIES:** Screen/Survey providers at start of every shift (or directly prior to responding to a call for a volunteer or every 12 hours).
2. **ALL PROVIDERS:** Pre-screen patients from 6 feet away.
3. **ALL PROVIDERS:** Limit exposure risk by using a single surgical mask (unless damaged or soiled) whenever possible during EMS shift.

EXPOSED PROVIDERS:

Healthcare facilities and EMS agencies, may allow healthcare personnel (HCP), which include EMS personnel, exposed to or recovering from COVID-19, whether direct care providers or other facility or agency staff, to work under the following conditions:

1. **OPERATIONS:** Exposed providers can continue to work permitting they are not symptomatic, and their absence would adversely impact the ability for an agency or EMS system to continue to provide an appropriate level of response. Self-monitoring should be continued as recommended below.
2. **ASYMPTOMATIC PROVIDERS:** HCP and EMS staff who have had contacts with confirmed or suspected cases and are asymptomatic.



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- **RETURN TO WORK ACTION:** HCP and EMS staff who are asymptomatic contacts of confirmed or suspected cases should self-monitor twice a day (temperature, symptoms), and undergo temperature monitoring and symptom checks at the beginning of each shift and at least every 12 hours.
 - **RETURN TO WORK ACTION:** Staff who are asymptomatic contacts should wear a facemask while working until 14 days after the last high-risk exposure.
3. **SYMPTOMATIC PROVIDERS:** HCP and EMS staff with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 have maintained isolation for at least 7 days after illness onset and have been at least 72 hours fever-free with other symptoms improving.
- **RETURN TO WORK ACTION:** At the current time, staff who are recovered from COVID-19 should wear a facemask until 14 days after onset of illness if mild symptoms persist but are improving.
4. **REDUCED RISK ASSIGNMENT** (if possible): At the current time, staff working under these conditions should preferentially be assigned, whenever possible, to job functions that have less contact with others. Staffing models may consider assigning partners who are both in this category to reduce risk. Crews may be assigned to work a slower response area that may have fewer patient contacts. As this pandemic grows, the potential that all staff will need to be assigned to any assignment will grow.
5. **PROVIDER BECOMES SYMPTOMATIC:** If staff who are asymptomatic develop symptoms consistent with COVID-19, they should immediately stop work and isolate at home. Testing should be prioritized for hospitalized healthcare workers. All staff with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 should be dealt with as if they have this infection regardless of the availability of test results.
6. **PROVIDER CONSULTATION WITH A PHYSICIAN:** Seven (7) days a week, between 0800 and 1000 hours, and again between at 1600 and 1800 hours, a Suffolk County EMS System provider may call medical control at 631-444-3600 for COVID-19 advise/personal consultation. The provider should identify themselves by name, agency and that they are calling regarding a COVID 19 encounter. This provides a venue for Suffolk County providers to ask questioning and obtain testing in this ever evolving public health emergency. This process will expedite medical clearance that may be required in order to return the provider to active duty. The physician may recommend the following:
- immediate return to normal activities;
 - a period of quarantine;
 - that the provider is tested for COVID-19;
 - that the provider sees their primary care physician; or
 - that the provider should go to the nearest emergency department.

Stony Brook University Hospital has been able to coordinate with the onsite, drive-through testing point for same day testing, if recommended by the physician.

QUESTIONS:

- General questions or comments about this advisory can be sent to emsinfo@health.ny.gov.
- **Call the Novel Coronavirus Hotline 24/7 at 1-888-364-3065 for additional guidance.**

Please don't hesitate to call the Suffolk County EMS Division at (631) 852-5080 or email nathaniel.bialek@suffolkcountyny.gov, if you have any questions or require any additional assistance. We will continue to keep you informed as this situation evolves.



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