

Interim for Fire Department Personnel - COVID-19 03-17-20

Good afternoon;

The Greenville County Fire Chiefs' Association EMS Committee has developed a Guidance Document for first response agencies in the developing outbreak of the Coronavirus.

The guidelines include previously issued guidelines such as limiting personnel to a minimum number necessary for any patient identified via GCEMS Communications as a COVID ALERT or once the first arriving EMT or Paramedic deems that patient is presenting signs and symptoms commonly associated with the Coronavirus including:

- Fever (100.4 or greater)
- Dry, non-productive cough
- Body Aches
- Shortness of Breath

When encountering a suspected COVID-19 patient, the first choice should always be to mask the patient (Surgical mask or Non-Rebreather mask) as appropriate and donning a SURGICAL MASK or N-95 HEPA mask. This is a change to previous guidance as a Surgical mask is now an alternative to the N-95.

Providers should still initially conduct an assessment from at least 6 feet away from any patient presenting with the above-noted signs and symptoms. If possible, obtain a patient's temperature if presenting with a non-productive cough, body aches, or difficulty breathing not associated with an underlying medical condition (I.e. Asthma, Bronchitis, COPD, CHF). We have ordered two Laser Thermometers with an estimated time of delivery of late this or early next week.

The attached document also outlines when personnel may need to be quarantined versus self-monitoring for 14 days and how to document contact with known or potential COVID-19 patients in ESO.

Continue to limit your exposure on and off duty and practice good hygiene including:

- Washing your hands
- Using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60%) when soap and water are not readily available.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands
- Stay at home if you are ill
- Clean equipment after each call and frequently touched surfaces regularly with a EPA-approved disinfectant.

And if you have any of the listed comorbidities (Hypertension, Diabetes, Respiratory Illnesses, Immunocompromised, and/or Advanced age) avoid crowds and practice Social distancing for at least the next two weeks.

Stay safe! And thanks for all you do.

Sincerely,

Robert Staples, MS, CFO, EFO
Fire Chief
Glassy Mountain Fire Department
2015 Highway 11

COVID-19 Update and Changes to Operations

03-14-20

Good day;

As the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19) continues to escalate throughout the United States, Public Safety (Police, Fire, and EMS) have been working with Public Health and Emergency Management personnel to develop a plan as the anticipated growth of this disease continues.

Large public event gatherings (250 persons or more) have been cancelled or postponed. Colleges and Universities have extended Spring Break and are switching to online education. Schools have been closed in parts of the state where there is a community spread of the disease and some districts have extended Spring Break and SC Emergency Management anticipates that to be extended to other areas new cases are identified. Persons that work in non-essential positions and those that work in large office settings are being encouraged to work from home in order to prevent the proliferation of this disease.

Although there are no known cases in Greenville County, Greenville County EMS has implemented a screening process for persons that may be potentially infected with COVID-19. Operations personnel have been previously advised of the alert that GCEMS will be providing to responding personnel (COVID ALERT) to better prepare personnel prior to arrival at the patient's side. As of March 13th at 3:00 PM, there have been 16 COVID ALERTS provided by GCEMS Communications.

In order to limit exposure to our personnel the following changes in daily operations will be placed into effect until further notice:

1. When dispatched to a **COVID ALERT** medical emergency, only one member should initially enter the patient's home or location of the alarm. If the dispatch did not include the COVID alert and the patient is displaying signs and symptoms of possible infection (Fever, Cough, Body Aches/Weakness, Nausea and/or Vomiting) medically trained personnel should utilize appropriate PPE as per the SC DHEC-BEMS guidelines previously communicated.
2. Persons without medical training (EMT or greater) should not engage in patient care activities if the medical emergency is a COVID ALERT or the EMT or Paramedic on scene advises other personnel to back out of the residence.
3. Those persons that have comorbidities (Diabetes, Heart Disease, Respiratory Disease, or are Immunocompromised) and are not essential personnel should refrain from response to any medical emergencies until further notice.
4. New members without Infection Control training shall not respond to any medical emergency.
5. **Observer / Ride Along programs are suspended until further notice.**
6. Family members are discouraged from visiting on duty personnel.
7. Although we have no public events scheduled other than a Board of Commissioners meeting on the 16th, any other planned public events will be suspended until further notice. The BOC meeting will proceed as scheduled unless the Board Chairman deems otherwise.
8. **Live Fire Training scheduled on the 28th is cancelled.** Although this is a small event, personnel utilize SCBA, promoting deep breathing and possible coughing and not every member has a personally-assigned SCBA mask. Personnel may also have to come in close contact with others that may not demonstrating signs or symptoms of viral infection but may be incubating Coronavirus or another virus.

As of this communication we are not cancelling the April 6th Monthly meeting and training. A decision to cancel or reschedule that meeting and the Harassment Free Environment training will be made closer to the event date.

Remember, be safe. Use common sense precautions to protect yourself from any viral infection. Wash your hands! Cover your cough! Stay home if you are ill! Don't touch your mouth, face, nose, or eyes with unclean hands. Use good social distancing practices (6' or more from possibly ill persons) and avoid crowded, condensed areas if you have any of the medical conditions outlined above.

Thanks for all you do!

Robert Staples, MS, CFO, EFO
Fire Chief
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