CAYUGA COUNTY EMERGENCY SERVICES

Emergency Management – Fire / Rescue – EMS – Special Operations

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First Responder FAQs

Are dispatchers questioning callers regarding COVID-19?

The dispatchers are using the enhanced questioning provided by ProQA regarding infectious disease, which is triggered by caller information regarding a sick person with respiratory symptoms and includes travel history questions.

Will properties/persons be flagged in the CAD system?

The Health Department has provided information on persons who are being quarantined and their addresses in order to be flagged in the CAD system. The 911 Center has developed a procedure to share this information appropriately with an eye towards appropriate personal information sensitivity.

How will the Dispatchers alert responders that they are responding to a property that has been flagged?

Dispatch will notify responders over the radio or MCT that there is a patient with corresponding symptoms and/or travel history. They will not use the terms "COVID-19" or "Coronavirus" over the air to minimize public reaction. They may ask the responding agency to call dispatch for further information and a responding unit may always call fire control by telephone.

Is everyone using IamResponding (IaR)? Can updates be sent through IAR?

While many FD/EMS agencies are using IaR, it is not the most efficient procedure to get this message out. The dispatcher may put in a note on the initial dispatch which would go out on the initial IaR message, however, there is no way for them to do updated messages in IaR.

What would be the trigger that would require first responders to be quarantined if they do not wear a mask?

If the patient is symptomatic and a confirmed case and the responder was not wearing the proper PPE, then the responder would need to be quarantined for a 14-day period. If the responder was wearing the proper PPE, then they would not have to be quarantined and could self-monitor for symptoms. If the patient was simply quarantined and not symptomatic, then the responder could self-monitor for symptoms.

If a responder is exposed, should they be placed in quarantine?

Yes, if a responder is exposed to a CONFIRMED case of COVID-19 or a person in isolation and test results have not been received, they should consult with the Health Department and potentially be placed in quarantine.

What is considered exposure? (Not wearing N95? Not wearing a gown? Not wearing eye protection? Not wearing gloves)

Exposure is being with a patient who is confirmed to have COVID-19 or is in isolation due to having symptoms and travel history or has been exposed to a confirmed case without the proper PPE. Proper PPE for anyone having contact with a confirmed case has been identified as gloves, gown, mask (N95), and eye protection.

If a first responder is exposed, should they go to the emergency room for medical evaluation as we do for first responders who are injured?

No, they should contact the Health Department at 315-253-1560

If a first responder is exposed: Is there a prophylactic anti-virulent medication that they should receive?

No, there is no prophylactic they can take.

How quickly can testing be done and results be received?

Once the test is received by the lab (Wadsworth State Laboratory) or other approved testing facility, results may be determined anywhere between 6 and 48 hours.

If a sick or injured person is transferred to the hospital, and it is learned that they tested positive for COVID-19, how will emergency responders and the department be notified of an employee contact (not necessarily exposed) with an infected person?

They would be contacted by the Health Department, who will investigate the person's contacts.

If the ambulances are called to care and transport sick persons with Covid19, or anyone with flu-like symptoms, what can first response EMS services do that best support the ambulance agencies and minimize the possibility of exposure?

Current guidance from BEMS for a confirmed case is to limit the number of responders to those absolutely necessary for the care of the patient. It has been advised per the guidance that if first response personnel can talk to and/or assess the situation from a distance of 6 feet or through a door (if the distance is not possible), then they should do so until EMS can arrive and suit up in the proper PPE. Ambulance personnel responding to a confirmed case should make the determination if they are able to put first response agency on stand-by or cancel altogether. We recommend that ambulance services and rescue squads discuss local protocol and respond accordingly.

Should EMS notify the Health Department before transporting a patient?

No, the EMS providers should notify the hospital prior to transporting a patient who is a confirmed case or in quarantine or isolation. In the case of a life-threatening situation, care should NOT be delayed in order to make the notification.

Are there any specific concerns with transporting patients with symptoms to Auburn Community Hospital?

ACH is requesting that symptomatic patients from respiratory conditions be masked prior to arrival at the emergency department. Giving the hospital as much notice as possible will allow them to better prepare the appropriate resources and direct you upon arrival.

What if I cannot get supplies like masks or hand sanitizer?

If local resources are depleted and all avenues to obtain resources locally have been exhausted, then agencies can contact the Office of Emergency Services. The office will then compile the list of agencies and resources needed and place a resource request to the state through the NY Responds system.

When requesting a resource order, please include the following information:

- Items requested – including the reason (i.e. hand sanitizer, type of mask, etc.)
- Quantity of each item (don't forget sizes if applicable)
- Amount that you currently have on hand
- How much you are projected to use during a 1-2 week period
- Impact if you are unable to obtain
- What efforts you have made to obtain supplies under normal procedures

Should our fire station or facility be closed down?

Local departments and their AHJ should strongly consider following the CDC guidelines for social distancing as it may apply to fire stations. Obviously, this does not apply to response or essential responder staffing. Those facilities that host public events should evaluate the impact of continuing such events.

General Questions:

What is a novel coronavirus?

Coronaviruses (CoV) are a large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases. A novel coronavirus (nCoV) is a new strain that has not been previously identified in humans. COVID-19 is the infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus.

How does the virus spread?

COVID-19 is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person.

- Between people who are near each other (within about 6 feet).
- Through respiratory droplets that go into the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.

How does it spread from contact with infected surfaces or objects?

It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

What does it mean to be quarantined?

- Quarantine means separating a healthy person or group of healthy people who have been exposed to a contagious disease away from others.
- Quarantine occurs in a specific designated location (i.e. home) for the purpose of observing and monitoring for the development of symptoms consistent with COVID-19.
- Basic essential daily living items like food, water, and prescribed medications will be supplied to the person throughout the duration of the quarantine order.

- The person must stay quarantined in the specific designated location until the health department releases the individual. The person cannot leave the location to go to work, school, play, or other public places.
- The Cayuga County Health Department will monitor health status for the 14-day period daily by phone asking for temperature and other pertinent health questions. If a person in quarantine develops symptoms, the nurse will determine if the person should seek medical attention and will inform the individual of any precautions to protect others.

Can someone who has been quarantined for COVID-19 spread the illness to others?

Quarantine means separating a person or group of people who have been exposed to a contagious disease but have not developed illness (symptoms) from others who have not been exposed, in order to prevent the possible spread of that disease. For COVID-19, the period of quarantine is 14 days from the last date of exposure, because the incubation period for COVID-19 is between 2-14 days. Someone who has been released from COVID-19 quarantine is not considered a risk for spreading the virus to others because they have not developed illness during the incubation period.

Will warm weather stop the outbreak of COVID-19?

It is not yet known whether weather and temperature impact the spread of COVID-19. Some other viruses, like the common cold and flu, spread more during cold weather months but that does not mean it is impossible to become sick with these viruses during other months. At this time, it is not known whether the spread of COVID-19 will decrease when weather becomes warmer. There is much more to learn about the transmissibility, severity, and other features associated with COVID-19 and investigations are ongoing.

Am I at risk for COVID-19 in the United States?

Yes. There have been cases of COVID-19 in the U.S. related to travel and person-to-person (community) spread. U.S. case counts are updated regularly. See the current

U.S. case count of COVID-19. There are cases of COVID-19 in Central New York as of 3/16/2020. For more information about cases in NYS, go to the NYS DOH.

How can I help protect myself?

There is currently no vaccine to prevent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. However, as a reminder, use everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases, including:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.

- Stay home when you are sick.

- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash. If a tissue is not available, cover your cough or sneeze into your elbow.

- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.

- Avoid handshakes and hugs, use an elbow bump instead

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.

- If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.

- For more information about handwashing, see CDC Handwashing website.

Should I wear a face mask?

Follow CDC's recommendations for using a facemask.

- CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19.

- Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. The use of facemasks is also crucial for health care workers and people who are taking care of someone in close settings (at home or in a health care facility).

What are the symptoms and complications that COVID-19 can cause?

Current symptoms reported for patients with COVID-19 have included mild to severe respiratory illness with fever, cough, and difficulty breathing. Read about COVID-19 Symptoms on the CDC website.

Should I be tested for COVID-19?

- Individuals who feel sick with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, and may have traveled to areas of concern, or have been in contact with somebody who has traveled to these areas, or has had contact with someone who had COVID-19, should call ahead to their health care provider before seeking treatment in person.
- Your healthcare professional will evaluate symptoms to determine if you need to be tested for COVID-19 based on NYSDOH criteria.

Where is testing conducted?

If a healthcare professional decides to test an individual for COVID-19, a sample is collected locally and sent to a lab for analysis. As of March 2020, the NYS lab, Wadsworth, is able to conduct the testing and commercial labs are starting to test as well. Samples no longer need to be sent to the CDC.

What if I do not have health insurance?

Governor Cuomo issued a directive requiring NY Insurers to waive the cost of COVID-19 testing.