

MEMO

Re: Covid-19 Medical and Medical Assist Response Procedure
To: Fire Chiefs, Firefighters, Mayors and Municipal Administrators
From: Derek Simmons, Director Fire Services/Fire Commissioner
Date: Updated March 23, 2020

In recent days, the Fire Service Division (FSD) have received a number of calls from municipalities/Local Service Districts (LSD) and fire departments regarding fire department response procedures to medical and medical assist calls where the patient may have been exposed to the Covid-19 virus. Some municipalities/LSD and fire departments have taken a short sighted decision and decided to discontinue medical or medical assist calls to patients that have been identified as potentially exposed to the Covid-19 virus. The FSD would encourage all municipalities/LSD that have previously approved medical and medical assist response calls to continue to provide this critical service. Now, more than ever, the residents in your community need your help. If your fire service become selective in only dealing with non-Covid-19 patients, your fire department will be putting an extra strain on the ambulance system. While we understand the fear associated with the risk of exposure to this and any other infectious virus, the risk can be managed with proper response procedures and appropriate PPE.

Each fire department that were previously approved for medical or medical assist calls should have developed procedures that required the use of universal PPE, including gloves, eye protection, respiratory protection and clothing to meet the risk identified.

Firefighters and other first responders should follow the procedures outlined by Health and Community Services “COVID-19, First Responders and the Novel Coronavirus” on the Government website at <https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/files/coronavirus-first-responder-march-15-2020.pdf>

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The purpose of PPE is to interrupt the transmission of infection. Donning (putting on) and doffing (taking off) of PPE should be reviewed. You are at greatest risk to contaminate yourself when removing PPE. If EMS is present, take direction from EMS. If EMS is not present and responding to a call involving a person suspected of having COVID-19.

- Immediately provide the person with a surgical mask to wear.

- Don the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment
 - AAMI level 2 fluid resistant gown or bunker gear,
 - 12 inch nitrile medical gloves
 - Surgical mask with eye protection. (goggles and surgical mask may be used depending on your profession)

Please check your inventory of PPE for medical and medical assist calls and advise FSD of your needs. The FSD is currently sourcing surgical mask and nitrile gloves for those fire departments that have run out of stock or did not have suitable PPE. If your fire departments is in need of suitable PPE and you cannot source equipment locally, please send a request directly to dsimmons@gov.nl.ca confirming that your fire department provides medical or medical assist calls and provide an estimate of the average number of calls per month. We will adjust the amount provided to prepare for increased call volume.

The FSD has also attached a document “Basic Turnout Gear Care” which should be used when cleaning the firefighter turnout gear (bunker gear).

For those fire departments that are looking for additional information in response procedures or infectious disease control, please check out the following links:

- <https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/files/Coronavirus-First-Responder-March-15-2020-Update-March-20-2020-002.pdf>
- <https://www.health.gov.nl.ca/health/publichealth/index.html>
- <https://www.myhealthunit.ca/en/health-professionals-partners/resources/designated-officers/EPOMNAEN0217-Designated-Officer-Resource-Manual-OADO-V1.0-02.2017.pdf>
- https://www.usfa.fema.gov/current_events/coronavirus.html
- <https://www.nfpa.org/Codes-and-Standards/Resources/Standards-in-action/NFPA-responds-to-the-coronavirus>.

As the situation regarding the Covid-19 issue is changing daily, we would recommend that you check with the official Government website <https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/> on a regular basis.

For further information, please contact the Fire Service Division at (709)-729-1608.