



Covid-19 Alert – Action Needed!

Fire/EMS

Primex³, in cooperation with our partners in public safety, is asking our public safety chiefs and administrators to re-evaluate their agencies' Covid-19 risk management protocols as both the nation and state see sharp increases in community transmission of the virus. This community transmission has also given rise to sharp increases in public safety personnel exposures and quarantines which could ultimately impact operational readiness for agencies both large and small in the state.

Primex³ claims data shows that public safety staff Covid-19 exposures and related quarantines fall into two broad categories – coworker exposures and exposures during calls for service – almost in equal numbers. And in most cases, long-identified risk management strategies may help to lessen exposures and the related staffing and financial impacts.

Action is needed now! Please take a moment and reevaluate the risk management practices outlined below and to reinforce how you and the leadership of your agency are making this a priority through policy enhancement and modeling of important behaviors and work practices.

Screen All Personnel for Signs or Symptoms of Covid-19 at the Start of Each Shift

Although screening for symptoms will not necessarily identify asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic individuals, symptom screening remains an important strategy.

- Screen all personnel (and visitors if allowed) for symptoms consistent with Covid-19 and exposure to others with Covid-19 infection. Screen personnel at the start of each shift.*
Screening should include:
 - ✓ Completion of a health screening questionnaire to include travel screening, and if the employee has been advised to self-quarantine because of exposure to someone with Covid-19 infection. A sample health screening questionnaire is available at: [CLICK HERE](#) for a sample questionnaire.
 - ✓ Temperature checks and confirm absence of fever associated with Covid-19. Fever is quantified as a temperature $\geq 100.0^{\circ}\text{F}$.
- Promptly manage anyone with symptoms of Covid-19 or who has been advised to self-quarantine.

* Screening for on-call and volunteer personnel can be difficult. Off-duty, call and volunteer personnel subject to recall should assess themselves at least once each morning as they are unable to assess their symptoms before responding to an emergency call.

A group of firefighters gather together at the station for training. Masks aren't worn and social distancing is not adhered to. The following day, one of the firefighters exhibits Covid-19 symptoms. All firefighters that were with the symptomatic firefighter the day before now have to quarantine for 14 days, severely impacting the department's ability to respond to calls for service.



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Enhance Universal Control Measures

Because of the potential for asymptomatic and pre-symptomatic transmission, source control measures are recommended for everyone. The potential for exposure to Covid-19 is not limited to calls for service. Transmission can also occur through unprotected exposures to asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic co-workers in the station.

At-work, personnel shall wear a facemask at all times while they cannot social distance (6 feet apart) including in apparatus, in breakrooms and offices, on the training ground, and any other spaces where they are in close contact with coworkers. *Safety in the station is equally as important as safety when out on calls for service.*

Enhance Physical Distancing

Designate areas for personnel to take breaks, eat, and drink that allow them to remain at least 6 feet apart from each other, especially when they must be unmasked. Other considerations:

- Assign staff in administrative functions to separate office spaces. Shared offices are a perfect environment for virus spread and exposure.
- Install barriers or shields between staff that must share office space. If needed, consider alternative office spaces to reduce room density.
- Assign staff to separate bunk rooms where possible for overnight shifts.
- Limit car-pooling to off-site training and related activities.
- Divide staff for department training to assist with social distancing and to limit community transmission within work groups.
- Consider the use of video conferencing applications (Zoom, Teams) for training activities.

** Manage in-station gathering on call backs to essential personnel. Release companies as soon as practical. Mandate mask use when coming and going from the station.*

While fire and EMS activities often require close physical contact, when possible, physical distancing (maintaining at least 6 feet between people) is an important strategy to prevent transmission. Some considerations are:

- Limit the number of providers in contact with patients to minimize possible exposures.
- Ideally, family members should not ride in the transport vehicle. If riding in the transport vehicle, they shall wear facemasks.



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Maintain Universal Precautions – PPE and Hygiene

- ✓ Avoid unnecessary close (within 6 feet) or physical (e.g., touching) contact with members of the general public.
- ✓ Perform as many tasks as possible in areas away from individuals with suspected or confirmed Covid-19.
- ✓ Ensure that cleaning and disinfection procedures are followed consistently. Clean all surfaces that others may have touched, including stretchers and re-useable medical equipment. Don't forget office equipment and desk.
- ✓ Keep a complete change of clothes/uniform at the station, and do not wear work clothes home. Call and volunteer personnel and those subject to recall should plan ahead and keep a change of clothes at the station.
- ✓ Fire and EMS personnel must use proper PPE when exposed to persons suspected or confirmed with Covid-19. Personal protective equipment ensembles may vary depending on the interaction but may include gloves, gowns, eye/face protection (e.g., goggles, face shield), face masks and NIOSH-certified disposable N95 filtering facepiece respirators.
- ✓ ***Per Governor's Executive Order - Mask are required if social distancing cannot be maintained.***

Risk Management is the identification, evaluation, and prioritization of those conditions that could cause harm or loss. The Covid-19 pandemic is a condition that has and continues to cause harm and loss and requires our constant management and adjustment.

Your partners at Primex³ remain available to help in guiding your many important decisions and strategies to manage this risk. Be alert and act now to review your agencies' strategies.

