



Inland Counties Emergency Medical Agency

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Serving San Bernardino, Inyo, and Mono Counties
Tom Lynch, EMS Administrator
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DATE: March 16, 2020

TO: EMS Providers - ALS, LALS, BLS, EMS Aircraft
Hospital CEO's, ED Directors, Nurse Managers and PLNs
Inyo, Mono and San Bernardino County EMCC Members
Medical Advisory Committee (MAC) Members
System Advisory Committee (SAC Members)

FROM: Tom Lynch
EMS Administrator

Reza Vaezazizi, MD
Medical Director

SUBJECT: COVID-19 GUIDANCE FOR HEALTHCARE PERSONNEL

This memo provides information regarding the Emergency Medical Service (EMS) response, and guidance for EMS field personnel who contact patients who may have or are suspected of having Novel Corona Virus infectious disease (COVID-19). Information is changing at a rapid pace thereby requiring periodic references to these guidelines and adherence to any change in recommendations for the care of these patients or the guidelines for healthcare personnel.

This document provides additional information for the establishment of safe practices in the care and transport of patients. ICEMA policies and protocols establish the standards for care and transport. Any hospital can receive a patient suspected of having COVID-19 and any base hospital may be contacted for consultation. There are no requirements for negative pressure isolation (i.e., Iso-POD Choice, etc.) during 9-1-1 transport of suspected COVID-19 patients.

The following is a summary and partial list of the recommendations. Please consult the EMS Provider and the Centers for Disease (CDC) for additional recommendations and further guidance.

Guidelines for Dispatch:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-for-ems.html>

The ICEMA Medical Director authorized the use of the Emerging Disease Surveillance Tool (EIDS) for the enhanced screening of emergency medical callers for use in conjunction with Protocol 26 - Sick Person and Protocol 6 - Breathing Problems. Dispatch will provide responding crews with early notification of symptomatic patients so proper personnel protective equipment can be used by providers within close proximity of a patient potentially infected with COVID-19.

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Personnel Protective Equipment (PPE):

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-for-ems.html>

The ICEMA Medical Director, in concert with established standards and recommendations from the CDC, recommend the following PPEs for all EMS field personnel.

- Disposable patient examination gloves,
- Disposable isolation gown,
- Respiratory protection (N-95 or higher level respirator), and
- Eye protection (goggles or disposable face shield that covers the front and sides of the face).

When responding to any 9-1-1 call, make sure you obtain information on whether the patient has fever, cough, and/or respiratory symptoms. In all these cases, regardless of travel history or COVID-19 exposure, don PPE to include N95 masks, gown, gloves, and eye protection before contact with the patient. Additionally, place a surgical mask on the patient.

We recommend limiting treatment activities, as appropriate, unless patient is unstable (obtain physician consultation if needed). Exercise caution and don full PPE with aerosol generating treatments, such as nebulized medications, intubation, continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP), suctioning, and if using bag valve mask (BVM).

Contact with these patients should be limited to only those providers that are necessary to provide patient care. Others should remain outside or as far away from the patient as possible. All providers including drivers and assistive personnel who have contact with the patient should wear the recommended PPEs. Drivers in vehicles with an isolated driver's compartment should remove their PPE and perform hand hygiene prior to initiating the transport. If the driver's compartment is not isolated, the driver should continue to wear the respirator during transport.

All personnel should avoid touching their face while working. After arrival at the facility and transfer of patient care, all providers should remove and discard PPE and perform hand hygiene. PPE should be discarded in accordance with established procedures and/or hospital policies.

Putting on and Removing PPEs:

<https://www.cdc.gov/hai/pdfs/ppe/PPE-Sequence.pdf>

The attached information from the CDC may be used as a reference for the putting on and talking off PPE. ICEMA recommends Example 2 for removing PPE to prevent self or cross contamination. When removing PPE remember that the gloves, front of the gown, the face shield and respirator are contaminated and care must be exercised to limit any possible contamination of non-contaminated areas. EMS field personnel must conduct hand hygiene if the hands become contaminated during removal. Generally, the sequence for removing PPEs are:

- Gown and gloves simultaneously
- Goggles/face shield
- Mask or respirator

Health Management for EMS personnel with Potential Exposure to COVID-19:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-risk-assesment-hcp.html>

Proper adherence including recommended infection control practices and the use of PPEs should protect all healthcare personnel even those having prolonged close contact with a patient under investigation for COVID-19. However, any inconsistencies in the use of or adherence to these practices could result in an unrecognized exposure. The CDC has provided guidance that defines exposure risk for healthcare personnel who are exposed to a confirmed COVID-19 patient or to one who is suspected and awaiting testing. Recommended work restrictions and guidelines for risk assessments are included with the referenced CDC guidelines.

Standard Precautions (<https://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/guidelines/isolation/index.html>):
To reduce the inadvertent transmission of COVID-19 between an infected patient, and self or others:

- Avoid unnecessary touching of surfaces in close proximity to the patient.
- Perform hand hygiene using antimicrobial or non-antimicrobial soap and water during patient care as follows:
 - before and after body contact
 - if hands will be moving from a contaminated body site to a clean part of the body
 - after contact with inanimate objects in the immediate vicinity of the patient
 - after removing gloves

Additional Information:

Additional information may be found by accessing the following websites.

- CDC website at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>
- San Bernardino County Department of Public Health at: <http://wp.sbcounty.gov/dph/coronavirus/>
- ICEMA at: <http://www.sbcounty.gov/icema/main/mailings.aspx>
- Healthcare Preparedness Planning Partnership (HP3) at: <https://hp3sbc.org/information-resources/>

If you have any questions, please contact Ron Holk, RN, EMS Coordinator, at (909) 388-5808 or via e-mail at ron.holk@cao.sbcounty.gov.

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