



COVID-19 Standards and Practices for Non-Medical First Responders

Disclaimer:

This *Quick Response Report* was published on May 28, 2020. Given the rapidly changing nature of the coronavirus pandemic, some of the references included in this report may quickly become out-of-date. We further caution readers that researchers at the Newfoundland & Labrador Centre for Applied Health Research are not experts on infectious diseases and are relaying work produced by others. This report has been produced quickly and it is not exhaustive, nor have the included studies been critically appraised.

Original Inquiry

“What standards and practices should non-medical first responders use in all activities with potential for exposure to high risk populations, which would include the enforcement of quarantine orders?”

Summary

We focused our search on non-medical first responders, including police and firefighters. We excluded sources that focused only on medical first responders such as paramedics and emergency medical services (EMS). We found a number of guidance documents for first responders in Canada as well as from other jurisdictions. We also found numerous guidance documents from international organizations. At this time, we found only two review documents and two primary research articles. We found eight relevant news articles. We did not find any systematic reviews or expert opinion articles.

Guidance Documents

Canada

Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety. **Coronavirus (COVID-19) Tips: First Responders**. April 14, 2020. [LINK](#)

- Guidance for self-protection, protecting others, call screening, working with individuals, transporting individuals, facility and staff management, and PPE.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police. **RCMP response to Coronavirus disease (COVID-19)**. March 13, 2020. [LINK](#)

Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (CACP). **Approach To Enforcement For Order In Council, Minimizing the Risk of Exposure to COVID-19 in Canada (Mandatory Isolation)**. [LINK](#)

- These guidelines suggest that taking a person into custody is likely not the best approach to enforcing self-isolation as this approach may not only place staff at risk, but may place others held in custody at risk as well.

Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (CACP). **COVID-19 and policing in Canada**. [LINK](#)

- Information for police on staying informed, pandemic planning, protecting frontline workers, response coordination, and communication.

British Columbia

BC Ministry of Health. **Letter to Police and Fire Re: Self-Isolation**. March 18, 2020. [LINK](#)

- Self-isolation after contact requires direction by Public Health officials.

BC CDC. **First Responders**. Page last accessed on May 28, 2020. [LINK](#)

- It is important to continue using appropriate personal protective equipment in line with established best practices.
- If a patient tests positive for COVID-19, public health will follow up with contacts of that individual – this includes household contacts, first responders, and others that may have been in close proximity while they were experiencing symptoms.

Alberta

Government of Alberta. **Update 53: COVID-19 pandemic in Alberta (May 5 at 5:30 p.m.)**. May 5, 2020. [LINK](#)

- Includes a Ministerial order that “allows for individual COVID-19 test results to be provided to police if an individual has deliberately put an officer at risk by coughing, sneezing or spitting on the officer.”
- A separate [self-assessment tool](#) is available for health-care and shelter workers, enforcement and first responders.

Edmonton Police Services. **COVID-19 Public Updates**. [LINK](#)

- Includes advice on the use of smart phone cameras
- Indicates that dispatching for calls for service should continue on a priority basis and suggests that responders practice social distancing/wear PPE.
- Guidelines included for sanitizing equipment and holding cells to prevent the spread of COVID-19, paramedic assessments and potential movement into isolation.

Ontario

Government of Ontario. **Ontario Takes Additional Measures to Protect First Responders During the COVID-19 Outbreak**. April 6, 2020. [LINK](#)

- In Ontario, an emergency order will allow police, firefighters and paramedics to obtain COVID-19-positive status information about individuals with whom they are coming into contact.
- Related article [LINK](#)

Public Health Ontario. **Evidence Brief: Infection Prevention and Control for First Responders Providing Direct Care for Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19 Patients**. March 29, 2020. [LINK](#)

- Contains a table: “Summary of PPE Recommendations for First Responders” that includes categories for Individual PPE, Activity-Based PPE, and appropriate PPE or Procedures.

Other Jurisdictions

United Kingdom

Public Health England. **COVID-19 personal protective equipment (PPE)**. Updated May 21, 2020. [LINK](#)

- Includes (see 8.1) guidance and an evidence review about aerosol generating procedures, noting that chest compressions and defibrillation are not considered to be AGPs.

Public Health England. **COVID-19: guidance for first responders**. Updated May 18, 2020. [LINK](#)

Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) UK. **Interview Protocol between the National Police Chiefs Council, Crown Prosecution Service, Law Society, the Criminal Law Solicitors’ Association and the London Criminal Courts Solicitors’ Association**. April 24, 2020. [LINK](#)

Scottish Police Federation. **COVID19 Information**. March 17, 2020. [LINK](#)

- Information for Scottish Police Federation personnel including responding to calls, PPE, isolation, etc.

Police Services of Northern Ireland. **COVID-19 advice and information**. [LINK](#)

Police Scotland. **Coronavirus advice for officers and staff**. [LINK](#)

- Webpage with Coronavirus information for officers and staff.

United States

Federal Healthcare Resilience Task Force. **COVID-19 - Disinfection of Structural Firefighting Personal Protective Equipment**. April 25, 2020. [LINK](#)

- “As of April 20, 2020, there is no scientific study specific to the disinfection of structural firefighting personal protective equipment (PPE) in response to COVID-19 that our team is aware of. This document is intended to serve as basic guidance for managing the disinfection of structural firefighting PPE (bunker gear/turnouts) potentially exposed to COVID-19.”

Federal Healthcare Resilience Task Force EMS/Prehospital Team. **Burnout, Self-care & Covid-19 Exposure for Families of First Responders**. April 25, 2020. [LINK](#)

- Provides suggestions to help families of first responders cope during the pandemic.
- Related website: [LINK](#)

CDC. **Implementing Safety Practices for Critical Infrastructure Workers Who May Have Had Exposure to a Person with Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19.** Page last reviewed April 20, 2020. [LINK](#)

CDC. **What Firefighters and EMS Providers Need to Know about COVID-19.** April 17, 2020. [LINK](#)

- Guidance document for firefighters, EMS providers, and their employers in relation to COVID-19.

CDC. **What Law Enforcement Personnel Need to Know about Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).** March 14, 2020. [LINK](#)

- “For law enforcement personnel performing daily routine activities, the immediate health risk is considered low.”
- FAQs for Law Enforcement Agencies and Personnel. Updated April 27, 2020. [LINK](#)

CDC. **Interim Guidance for Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Systems and 911 Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) for COVID-19 in the United States.** Updated March 10, 2020. [LINK](#)

Department of Homeland Security. **Information for First Responders on Maintaining Operational Capabilities during a Pandemic.** 2007. [LINK](#)

- Potential ways to adjust operations to maintain readiness and response
- Guidance for leaders in the first responder community at the local level, including two planning tools
- Reference sheets with discipline-specific potential action steps

International Organizations

International Association of Chiefs of Police. **IACP COVID-19 Resources.** Updated May 11, 2020. [LINK](#)

- Considerations for Law Enforcement Encountering COVID-19-Related Deaths [LINK](#)
- Law Enforcement Officer Exposure to COVID-19 [LINK](#)
- Officer Wellness and Resiliency During the COVID-19 Pandemic [LINK](#)
- COVID-19 Public Health Protections [LINK](#)
- Organizational Readiness: Ensuring your Agency is Prepared for COVID-19 [LINK](#)
- COVID-19: Staying Healthy as a Police Officer [LINK](#)
- Alternative Methods for Delivering Essential Law Enforcement Services. [LINK](#)
- HIPAA Considerations for Law Enforcement during the COVID-19 Pandemic [LINK](#)
- Processing DUIs during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Considerations for Law Enforcement [LINK](#)
- Law Enforcement and COVID-19 Police Chief Supplement [LINK](#)

National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) & CPP. **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) operational guidance.** Circulated April 8, 2020. [LINK](#)

- “On entering premises where there is no prior information or suggestion that those present are suspected or confirmed as having COVID-19 officers should have PPE ‘readily available’ capable of being donned quickly prior to, or upon, entering using the NDM to risk assess each incident.”
- “When ‘close contact with the public is likely and social distancing is not available and possible risk of infection exists’ it is recommended that officer and staff wear a fluid resistant surgical mask (IIR) and gloves (non-latex). Furthermore that they conduct a risk assessment on use of a goggles and an apron.”
- “When ‘close contact with the public is likely and social distancing not available and symptomatic’ it is recommended that officers and staff wear a fluid resistant surgical mask (IIR), gloves (non-latex), disposable aprons, goggles. Furthermore that they conduct a risk assessment on the use of a fluid-repellent cover-all/over-suit.”

National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). **NFPA 1581: Infection Control Program Resource for First Responders (Tip Sheet)**. April 02, 2020. [LINK](#)

- “Departments should have a part- or full-time employee serve as the infection control officer (ICO) to manage all aspects of infection control programs. When notified of an infectious exposure, the ICO is responsible for the notification, verification, treatment, medical follow-up, and case documentation.”

United Nations. **Police Planning during a COVID-19 Pandemic**. April 1, 2020. [LINK](#)

INTERPOL. **Guidelines highlight current and emerging crime threats as well as practical advice for protection measures**. March 26, 2020. [LINK](#)

- See “Related Documents: COVID-19 Pandemic - Guidelines for Law Enforcement” [LINK](#)

International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC). **Guide For Coronavirus Planning & Response: IAFC Coronavirus Task Force**. March 23, 2020. [LINK](#)

- Link to IAFC Coronavirus Dashboard [LINK](#)
- Officer Wellness Resources [LINK](#)

International Association of Firefighters (IAFF). **First Responder Guidance: Risk Assessment for Potential Exposure to a Person under Investigation or Infected COVID-19 Patient**. [LINK](#)

- Describes both high-risk and low-risk exposures for firefighters/emergency response personnel. Includes guidance on what to do if exposed.

Systematic Reviews

None found at this time.

Expert Opinion

None found at this time.

Primary Research

Baker, Peckham, & Seixas. **Estimating the burden of United States workers exposed to infection or disease: A key factor in containing risk of COVID-19 infection.** April 28, 2020. [LINK](#)

- “Based on our analyses, approximately 10% (14.4 M) of United States workers are employed in occupations where exposure to disease or infection occurs at least once per week. Approximately 18.4% (26.7 M) of all United States workers are employed in occupations where exposure to disease or infection occurs at least once per month. While the majority of exposed workers are employed in healthcare sectors, other occupational sectors also have high proportions of exposed workers.”

Lum, C., Maupin, C., & Stoltz, M. **The Impact of COVID-19 on Law Enforcement Agencies (Wave 1).** April 13, 2020. [LINK](#)

- A report on the first panel of data collected by a survey of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) by the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy (CEBCP) at George Mason University on the impacts of COVID-19 on law enforcement agencies in the United States and Canada.

News Articles

Edmonton Journal. **COVID-19: First-responders, corrections officers can sign up for COVID-19 testing; 106 new cases and two deaths Saturday.** April 5, 2020. [LINK](#)

The Globe and Mail. **B.C. firefighters ordered to attend immediately life-threatening calls only.** April 2, 2020. [LINK](#)

The Chronicle Herald (Halifax). **EHS tells volunteer first responders not to attend medical calls amid COVID concerns.** March 25, 2020. [LINK](#)

Global News. **Emergency responders’ jobs changing in face of coronavirus pandemic.** March 20, 2020. [LINK](#)

- “Vancouver’s fire department is preparing to stop responding to the site of non-critical medical calls to preserve its ability to respond to major fires and other emergencies during the [COVID-19](#) pandemic. ‘We’re triaging ourselves to maximize our ability to stay resilient for a long term,’ Fire Chief Darrel Reid said.”

The Harvard Gazette. **Vital challenge, for those always ready: MGH disaster expert outlines how first responders will tackle COVID-19.** March 12, 2020. [LINK](#)

LA Times. **Keeping police officers healthy during coronavirus is essential. Here is what LAPD is doing.** March 11, 2020. [LINK](#)

Other

Canadian Police Knowledge Network. **Infectious Disease and Pandemic Preparedness.** [LINK](#)

- Free online course for police officers.

Methodology

Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Applied Health Research (NLCAHR) COVID-19 Quick Response reports are initiated by, and shared with, our partners in the provincial health system, including the four Regional Health Authorities, the Departments of Health and Community Services and Children, Seniors and Social Development, and public health officials.

NLCAHR staff work with topic submitters to clarify the research question. We then search for related systematic reviews, meta-analyses, other reviews, interim and other guidance statements, primary research, expert opinion and health and science reporting.

We use several search strategies, with a focus on the following databases:

- [Alberta Health Services](#)
- [CADTH](#)
- [Canadian Pharmacists Association](#)
- [Campbell Collaboration](#)
- [Cochrane Collaboration](#)
- [Centre for Disease Control](#) (CDC)
- [Centre for Evidence Based Medicine](#) (CEBM)
- [Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre](#)
- [European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control](#)
- [Health Canada](#)
- [Joanna Briggs Institute](#)
- [Johns Hopkins](#)
- [MedRxiv](#)
- [National Institutes of Health](#) (NIH)
- [National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases](#) (NIAID)
- [National Library of Medicine](#)
- [Public Health Agency of Canada](#)
- [Trip Database](#)
- [World Health Organization](#)

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