PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONDER/HEALTHCARE WORKER EXPOSURE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

MAY 5, 2020

Background

In Executive Order N-27-20 of March 15, 2020, Governor Gavin Newsom ordered that “[t]o address increased demand for health care workers and first responders” the responsible state agencies “shall authorize first responders, health and human services care providers and workers who are asymptomatic to continue working during the period of this emergency, subject to those responders, providers, and workers taking precautions to prevent transmission.” This places the duty on emergency medical systems, public health departments and health care systems to return these individuals to work with reasonable precautions except if it is unsafe to do so. Assessing these workers’ suitability to perform work after an exposure to a COVID-19 case without placing clients or patients at risk is therefore of critical importance.

General Procedure

The suspected contact or known contact with a COVID-19 patient must be immediately reported to the Designated Infection Control Officer (DICO) at the agency or department for the emergency responder or healthcare worker (HCW). The Agency or Department DICO will initiate the needed occupational health processes. The DICO will also make contact with the MHOAC Duty Officer (951-830-8041) or Special Case Investigation Public Health Nurse (951-955-9732) for exposure reporting.

Emergency responders and healthcare workers wearing appropriate PPE during patient contact with a suspected person under investigation or a confirmed positive case are not considered exposed. Simple face coverings are not necessarily considered appropriate PPE.

The Special Case Investigation Nurse and/or designee will discuss with the agency or department DICO and/or emergency responder/HCW to evaluate case circumstances, PPE strategies utilized and potential source patient detail. The Disease Control team will research the source patient test results and implications for exposure.

Cases of exposure may be reported from more than one source:
Emergency responders/HCWs reporting exposure to a suspected person under investigation (PUI) or a confirmed case

Healthcare system reporting positive test result in patient contacted by emergency responders or HCW

Medical Examiner postmortem process reveals positive test result and likely emergency responder contact

The Confidential Morbidity Report (CMR) requirement for COVID-19 is can be used to report confirmed and suspect cases of COVID-19. Please fax to 951-351-6838. Health care facilities enrolled in CalREDIE may submit an electronic report.

Exposure Evaluation Process

Emergency Responders/Health Care Workers Exposed, Asymptomatic

- Can return to work at minimum wearing a surgical mask. Mask wearing is required during essential duties and personal non-work activities. A simple face covering is not sufficient.
- If unable to wear surgical mask at work, exclude and complete a 14 day quarantine:
  - RUHS PH Disease Control issues initiation of quarantine letter to emergency responder or HCW. Emergency Responder or HCW engages their agency specific Occupational Health.
  - Twice daily (morning/evening) temperature checks must be performed.
  - Self-monitoring for respiratory symptoms must be performed.
  - If source patient tests negative, quarantine can be lifted.
  - At the conclusion of the 14-day quarantine, RUHS PH Disease Control issues a conclusion of quarantine letter to emergency responder or HCW and they may return to regular duties without restriction.
- If any symptoms develop during the 14-day period, the emergency responder or HCW must report them as soon as possible to the agency DICO and Special Case Investigation Nurse, and is immediately excluded from work. The protocol below for symptomatic individuals should be followed, including referral to testing via Special Case Investigation Nurse.
  - While the test is pending, continue home isolation.
  - 14-day quarantine minimum from date of exposure is still required, even if the test is negative.
  - Asymptomatic emergency responders/healthcare workers may be tested no sooner than 4 days post exposure.
Emergency Responders/Health Care Workers Exposed, Symptomatic

- Exclude from work.
- Special Case Investigation Nurse or Disease Control will refer them for testing through the Public Health Laboratory.
  - While test is pending, continue home isolation.
    - Healthcare workers (HCW) (e.g. hospital employees) are evaluated individually through Disease Control nursing staff. Contact should be made by hospital Infection Preventionist, hospital designated officer or affected employee to the Special Case Investigation Public Health Nurse line at 951-955-9732 during business hours. After hours contact Disease Control Branch at 951-906-9001.
    - Emergency Responders are evaluated individually through Special Case Investigation Nurse Unit. Contact must be via agency or department DICO or the affected employee to 951-955-9732 during business hours. After hours contact Disease Control Branch at 951-906-9001.
  - If the responder/HCW tests positive, follow procedure below.
  - If the responder/HCW tests negative:
    - If the source patient has a positive test result:
      - Still complete minimum 14-day quarantine from date of exposure regardless of symptoms.
      - If the responder/HCW is no longer symptomatic, they may return to work with a mask as per the Asymptomatic protocol above and complete the quarantine.
      - Otherwise, evaluate other possible causes (such as flu or other viral illness) and determine the need for repeat testing if re-exposure is suspected.
    - If the source patient tested negative:
      - If the responder/HCW is no longer symptomatic, issue clearance to work. They may return to regular duties without restriction.
      - Otherwise, evaluate other possible causes (such as flu or other viral illness) and determine the need for repeat testing if re-exposure is suspected.

Emergency Responders and Healthcare Workers Who Test Positive With Symptoms

- Remain on home isolation until:
- At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since recovery defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); AND
- at least 10 days since date of last positive test.

- Disease Control will issue a clearance letter. A negative test is not required for clearance.
- Cases where home isolation represents a challenge (e.g., high-risk family members at home) are evaluated individually by Special Case Investigation Nurse Team.
- Healthcare workers (HCW) such as hospital employees are evaluated individually through Disease Control nursing staff. Contact should be made by hospital Infection Preventionist, hospital designated officer or affected employee to the Special Case Investigation Public Health Nurse line at 951-955-9732 during business hours. After hours contact Disease Control Branch at 951-906-9001.
- Emergency Responders are evaluated individually through Special Case Investigation Nurse Team. Contact must be via agency or department DICO or the affected employee to 951-955-9732 during business hours. After hours contact Disease Control Branch at 951-906-9001.

**Emergency Responders and Healthcare Workers Who Test Positive and are Asymptomatic**

- Remain on home isolation until at least 10 days have passed since the date of their first positive COVID-19 diagnostic test assuming they have not subsequently developed symptoms since their positive test. If they develop symptoms, then the non-test based criteria above should be used.

We appreciate your help in keeping all residents of Riverside County healthy.

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