

COVID-19 Conference call – Local Emergency Management/Local Public Safety/ESF

March 19, 2020 / 1:15PM

Background:

- Please refer to the DPH website (www.mass.gov/covid19) for current information.
- Mass 211 is activated and includes staff from the DPH to answer COVID-19 questions.
- There is a shortage of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). The Command Center is aggressively pursuing every legitimate supply chain opportunity both internationally and nationally and is placing orders. This includes coordinating with MassBio and MEMA to collect donated supplies through the [Massachusetts Life Sciences Emergency Supply Hub](#). PPE supplies are available for procurement. Local communities are encouraged to attempt to procure, in addition to submitting resource requests through the state.
- PPE Requests: Medical agencies and entities (hospitals, nursing homes, community health centers, emergency medical services, local public health, and other health facilities requesting PPE should contact their regional Health and Medical Coordination Coalitions (HMCCs): <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/learn-about-the-health-and-medical-coordinating-coalitions>. Police/Fire departments and other community agencies requesting PPE should make the requests through MEMA's regional offices. The Command Center, in partnership with DPH and MEMA, has developed new guidance on prioritizing and optimizing Personal Protective Equipment during COVID-19 Response - see <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-guidance-and-directives#guidance-on-prioritization-of-ppe-in-ma>.
- State EOC and Regional EOCs are activated and focusing on resources requests, information sharing, logistics, mass care/sheltering, first responder working group.
- Communities are encouraged to continue using WebEOC for information sharing.
- An Emergency Declaration under the Stafford Act was declared on Friday, March 13th. Agencies should continue to track costs. Details: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/fema-3438-em-ma-covid-19-emergency-declaration>
- Small Business Loan information can be found [here](#).
- DPH Commissioner has signed an order [Regarding the Sharing of Critical Information with First Responders](#).
- DPH Commissioner has signed an order for [Providing for Continuity of Emergency Medical Services Care](#).
- DPH Commissioner has signed an [Order Extending the Registration of Certain License Health Care Professionals](#).
- **The state's COVID-19 website has a large section of resources for [State and Local Government](#) including a section for "Emergency Responders & Law Enforcement".**
- For all Emergency Orders and Guidance associated with the COVID-19 State of Emergency, see: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-state-of-emergency>

Definitions and Information:

Quarantine: Someone is in quarantine if they are in close contact with someone who has confirmed/presumptive case or have [traveled](#) to high risk countries. Quarantine is typically for 14 days.

Isolation: Someone is in isolation if they are confirmed or presumptive for COVID-19. Those in isolation are being monitored and need follow up testing and need to have tests showing no COVID-19 before being released.

State Epidemiology line: 617-983-6300

Questions and Answers:

Q: Does OEMS want all first responders to use PPE (masks) on all patients or just COVID-19 related patients?

A: OEMS answer: Please refer to the CDC guidance on this question. All COVID-19 suspected patients should be masked. Guidance can be found [here](#). See the “Emergency Responders & Law Enforcement” section of the [State and Local Government](#) guidance for all specific guidance for EMS providers.

Q: Question regarding first responders being tested for COVID-19. Some have found it difficult to be tested despite requesting it.

A: DPH answer: First responders should follow up with their local healthcare provider if they were within close contact (including, but not limited to being within 6 feet for 15 minutes or longer) to determine if they may need to be quarantined. As of now, testing is provided for those who are symptomatic. The close contact definition is not an order for people to maintain space, but is a recommendation. The close contact definition which includes the 6 feet/15 minutes is from the CDC. The following guidance was provided by DPH to healthcare providers regarding testing of persons suspect COVID-19:

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/covid-19-pui-criteria/download>

The drive through coronavirus testing location at CVS at 720 Boston Turnpike in Shrewsbury has testing for first responders.

Q: Is there a plan for preventing the spread of COVID-19 for the homeless population?

A: A plan for the homeless population is currently being worked on.

Q: Many of our first responders live in or near Rhode Island. Is it possible to get the number of COVID-19 positive cases in Rhode Island?

A: DPH answer: We are in contact with Rhode Island frequently and sharing information between states. Like Massachusetts, Rhode Island is posting the case numbers here:

<https://health.ri.gov/data/covid-19/>

Q: Is there guidance for those with opioid addictions?

A: DPH answer: DPH issued an order [Regarding the Administration of Certain Medications for the Treatment of Opioid Use Disorder](#).

Q: Are self-care facilities such as barber shops, nail salons, and massage shops privy to the 6 foot distancing for 15 minutes guidance? (This is referring to the social distancing recommendation of no close contact with in 6 feet of someone for a minimum of 15 minutes). Should we tell these stores about this ban?

A: Recommend all people follow guidance from state and local officials. The state guidance at this time did not explicitly close these facilities and the 6 foot guidance was only a recommendation, not mandatory. However, on March 23,2020, Governor Baker issued an [emergency order](#) ordering nonessential businesses and organizations to close their physical workspaces and facilities to customers, workers and the public, which would likely affect most of these types of business.

Q: Is there any guidance for a large scale quarantine for first responders or medical workers who are not showing symptoms but do not want to go home to their families and possibly infect them?

A: Yes, large scale quarantine effort is currently being worked on, but will not be in every community. MEMA encourages communities to make their own quarantine plans for unmet needs in their communities with hotels and other building spaces.

Q: Should there be some type of video conference call for patients before they get transported to a hospital and can possibly infect others?

A: DPH/OEMS answer: OEMS considering various treatment options, but as of now, there is no related change in EMS protocol from OEMS related to this. See the “Emergency Responders & Law Enforcement” section of the [State and Local Government](#) guidance for all specific guidance for EMS providers for extension of various certifications.

Q: Many fire fighters and first responders have to take “Refresher” trainings in EMS courses. Is it possible to extend these trainings?

A: OEMS answer: See the “Emergency Responders & Law Enforcement” section of the [State and Local Government](#) guidance for all specific guidance for EMS providers for extension of various certifications.

Q: Is there anything being done for medical personnel who do not want to go home for fear of infecting their families?

A: The Mass Care Work Group in the State Emergency Operations Center is working on several housing solutions, including one for first responders. Non-congregate housing (which is what this is) requires special approval by FEMA before we can implement. MEMA is obtaining this approval currently.

Q: What is the testing turnaround time now that the testing number has increased?

A: DPH answer: Testing time at DPH state lab is 24-48 hours once received, and are trying to prioritize testing for healthcare workers.

Q: On a local level, are towns able to provide quarantine locations without the help of MEMA? Is there any guidance?

A: MEMA answer: Yes, communities are encouraged to make local plans and arrangements for unmet needs. Please put the information into WebEOC and any requests through their MEMA regional office. MEMA to provide guidance when developed by DPH.

Q: Question regarding if towns should close down their parks?

A: DPH answer: This is a case by case basis. Please contact your local board of health for recommendations.

Q: Looking for information sharing between local Board of Health and PSAP/first responders to help identify potential cases before on scene arrival to help prioritize PPE.

A: DPH answer: For now, assess anyone with symptoms as a positive case and use proper PPE. DPH Commissioner has signed an order [Regarding the Sharing of Critical Information with First Responders](#).

Q: Will there be a conference call regarding the tracking of COVID-19 costs?

A: MEMA answer: MEMA has provided initial guidance for cost tracking: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/fema-3438-em-ma-covid-19-emergency-declaration>. More information to come, for now continue to track COVID-19 related costs for potential future reimbursement.

Q: Will there be a waiver for inspections on smoke/CO detectors? Some think it could be dangerous to send public safety personnel into homes for extended periods of time.

A: At time of call, issue was being investigated. On March 20, Governor Baker issued an order making a change to the inspection statutes that require a smoke and carbon dioxide alarm inspection prior to a residential real estate transaction. [PRESS RELEASE](#) | [ORDER](#)

Q: Are private testing sites sending information to DPH or CDC? How much testing is being done?

A: Testing results from all labs gets sent to DPH and is included within their statistics. Please visit www.Mass.gov/COVID19 for testing statistics.

Q: Can there be a central listing of test centers to find nearby testing locations?

A: DPH answer: For now, people should contact their medical provider for screening. Will investigate if in future a list can be created.

Q: Can you give an update on the PPE shipment that came in to Massachusetts?

A: DPH answer: A small portion of order has come in from the Strategic National Stockpile of gloves, gowns, masks, and we're requested more. See bullets in background section on page 1 for PPE update.

Q: What should be done for travelers returning from domestic flights?

A: People should monitor themselves, currently no restrictions on domestic travel.

Q: What do we do with a dead body if it takes a long time for first responders to respond?

A: This issues will be brought to the first responder working group, which includes the Medical Examiner's Office. Temporary morgue planning is currently being worked on.

Q: Is there any guidance for assisting with elderly housing complex that may be doing communal dining?

A: Please use social distancing guidance for congregate housing. DPH has guidance [here](#).

Q: Is there guidance for decontaminating an ambulance?

A: CDC has this guidance online: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-for-ems.html>

Q: Question about who might be an “emergency worker” and potential travel restrictions.

A: On March 23, Governor Baker issued an emergency order ordering nonessential businesses and organizations to close their physical workspaces and facilities to customers, workers and the public. [PRESS RELEASE](#) | [ORDER](#) | [ESSENTIAL SERVICES LIST \(Doc\)](#) | [ASSEMBLAGE GUIDANCE](#). There are no travel restrictions at this time.

Q: What do we do for patients who refuse treatment?

A: See the “Emergency Responders & Law Enforcement” section of the [State and Local Government](#) guidance for all specific guidance for EMS providers. See the [Emergency Statewide Treatment Protocol](#) for guidance.

Q: How will daycare closures and options for emergency workers be implemented?

A: See: https://eelead.force.com/apex/EEC_ChildCareEmergencyProcedure