



# TOWNSEND FIRE-EMS DEPARTMENT

*Proudly serving the citizens of Townsend since 1875*

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## DIRECTIVE

**To:** All Personnel  
**From:** Mark R. Boynton, Fire-EMS Chief  
**Subject:** COVID19Update  
**Date:** April 30, 2020 Update

**CONFIDENTIAL**

*Please read entire document, changes are highlighted..*

Friday March 13<sup>th</sup> an SOG for highly infected patients was issued followed by a March 23<sup>rd</sup> Directive in Covid19. As the pandemic progresses we will continue to monitor the situation and recommendations from CDC, FEMA, MEMA, DPH. At this time the SOG issued continues to be the best practice. Please make sure you are familiar with this guideline and respond as indicated.

**SOG key points- No Change** - All medical calls the response and number of emergency responders shall be limited as much as possible. Proper protective equipment for routine medical calls shall be gloves and surgical mask. If COVID19 is suspected PPE shall be a surgical mask, double pair of gloves, safety glasses, Tyvek suit or gown. It is important to put a surgical mask on the patient as soon as possible if they will tolerate it. If the suspected COVID19 patient is in need of life saving measures such as nebulizer treatment, CPAP, intubation, CPR or rescue breathing all responders with patient contact shall wear a N95 mask. Nebulizer and CPAP must be discontinued prior to entering the emergency room. If proper protective clothing is utilized the risk of exposure is very low.

**Supply's – Updated** - We currently have 160 Medical Grade N95 masks, 7 large, 126 medium and 27 small. 4 boxes of surgical masks (200) and 640+ KN95 surgical masks. A word of caution KN95 are not the same as N95 Respirator. They have ear straps instead of head straps, they are white not blue, **do not use these in place of N95 masks.** We also have 75 construction grade N95 construction masks that can be also be used in place of surgical masks if we run out, 200 gowns sizes 2x and 4x and plenty of gloves. Because we have no idea how long this pandemic will last and how long it will take to get supplies if N95 masks are used on a call do not dispose of them unless they were splashed with bodily fluids. After the call place them in a brown burger box located in supply room, write you name on it and it can be reused by the same person five times. This will be your assigned mask until it can be replaced. Same procedure will be used for surgical mask following DPH Comprehensive PPE Guidance dated April 5, 2020 We have put in service “Aerosol Boxes” that we hope will limit the exposure to providers during aerosolizing procedures.

Everyone will need to be trained on its intended use to be proficient at using them, we will be putting together a video or instructions on how they should be utilized.

We have purchased scrubs for personnel to wear while on duty. Several department in the area have switched to scrubs to wear over or in place of uniforms to reduce contamination and make decontamination easier. After a call involving a highly infectious patient the scrubs can be quickly change and laundered. **Please wash contaminated scrubs immediately after the call. Dirty scrubs should be placed in the hamper in the laundry room at the end of each shift. Please wash scrubs in the laundry room washing machine not in the turn out gear washer extractor. Clean scrubs will be available for personnel in the rest room at the central station.**

**Off Duty Exposure – No Change** - Out of an abundance of caution if you have a family member living in your house that has been exposed and is quarantined you will not be allowed to work until that family member test negative and is allowed to return to work. If the family member test positive you will not be allowed to return to active duty for 14 days after exposure.

If you are in close contact with friends, family members or personnel you work with at another place of employment and they becomes symptomatic you must inform Captain Scott or Captain Grimley as soon as possible and prior to reporting for duty or responding to any calls. To limit exposure other emergency responder and patients you will not be allowed to return to work and respond to any calls until you are cleared by Captain Scott or myself. If you become systematic do not respond to calls or shifts to work. Notify your PCP for guidance then notify Captain Scott or myself.

**Confirmed Cases – Updated** – **As of today there have been 21 confirmed cases of COVID19 reported in Townsend. There are multiple cases (3) at 40 Fitchburg Rd, Pine Ridge Estates. For this reason personnel shall wear full PPE as described in the Highly Infected Patients SOG for ALL medical calls at this address. For fire calls at any of the COVID19 locations identified in town entry into the structure should be limited to one or two people in full-turn out gear including SCBA. Medical exam gloves maybe used in place of structural gloves during investigations. Per diem and full-time staff responding from the central station may wear N95 mask in place of SCBA if they bring their N95 on the call. COVID19 POSITIVE LOCATIONS ARE CONFIDENTIAL AND SUBJECT TO HIPPA LAWS, DO NOT SHARE WITH THE GENERAL PUBLIC INCLUDING PINERIDGE OWNERS, OCCUPANTS AND MAINTENANCE STAFF.**

Addresses for positive cases have been marked on the I Am Responding map with a stop sign symbol that says COVID 19. All personnel are to check IAR when responding to calls and wear the appropriate PPE when responding to these locations. Attwood Acres and Townsend Woods and other locations have also been marked in IAR with a Biohazard symbol because the individuals living at these locations are at high risk. All calls to these locations personnel shall wear a surgical mask to protect the residents. PPE supplies have been placed on all fire apparatus with the exception of the forestry vehicles.

All responses to suspected COVID19 patents shall be documented as an exposure or potential exposure. See attached “ADVISORY 03-02-2020” Again if crew members were properly protected the risk is low. When completing the PCR for a suspected or confirmed COVID 19 patient there is a

new AmbuPro intelliform to be filled out by the primary technician, please see Captain Scott or fulltime staff to assist you. Per Massachusetts Department of Public Health memorandum dated

March 19<sup>th</sup> and CDC Guidelines <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-for-ems.html> those crew members can continue to work if it will affect staffing levels. However they shall be monitored for symptoms at the start of each shift and must wear a surgical mask while at work.

Unprotected exposure to individuals with COVID19 will follow CDC Guidelines <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-risk-assesment-hcp.html> placed on inactive status and self-quarantine for 14 days.

**Inspections- No Changes** – All annual inspections are on hold, all other inspections (oil burner, propane tank, smoke/CO etc) will continue as they are low risk and essential. The Governor has allowed home owners to defer 26F and 26F1/2 inspections for 90 days after the state of emergency is terminated if the buyer agrees to accept responsibility. If an owner or buyer calls indicating they will be deferring the inspection please record the name, date, address and contact information and forward it to Captain Grimley and myself so we can follow up. When conducting inspections please adhere to the following guidelines:

- Prior to the inspection, on the same day as the inspection call the occupant or relator and ask if anyone in the house is sick or has been sick? If the answer is yes the inspection shall be rescheduled 21 days in the future. The occupant/relator shall be directed to the Governors order allowing deferral of inspection as an option.
- Personnel may wear and surgical mask while performing inspections, keep 6 feet way from all other people and limit the time in the dwelling.

**Staffing – No Changes** – Staffing levels continue to slowly drop and full-time staff are working a ton of overtime to fill shifts. Looking at the May schedule there are 11 out of 22 per diem paramedics on the schedule. We essentially have 11 medics that are inactive! We have one in quarantine opening up additional shifts. We have five personnel that are on leave of absence and one that has resigned due to COVID19. We are now showing signs of impending staffing shortages with full-time staff picking up the open shifts. Effective Saturday 4/18 we implemented phase one of the staffing plan below. Captain Grimley is working Wednesdays through Saturday and Captain Scott is working Sunday through Wednesday. We will have 3 personnel on duty during the day on Saturday and Sunday to assist crews with PPE, response and disinfecting after calls. This will drop staffing on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 5 down to 4.

Phase one – In the event we lose additional per diem staff causing us to run short on weekends the two Day shift Captains that currently work M-R or T-F will transition to Sunday through Wednesday and Wednesday through Saturday. They will overlap and both work on Wednesdays. This does not change the number of hours work, it only changes the schedule and provides coverage on the weekends by reducing staffing week days.

Phase two – In the event we lose additional per diem staff causing us to run short nights and weekends we transition to 3 groups of two. This throws out our current staffing model.

Puts the 6 full-time staff into three groups working 24 hours with two days off changing to from a 40 or 42 hour work week to a 56 hour work week. This option works if we continue to have per diem personnel willing to supplement staffing during week days when call volume is typically highest.

Phase three – If we have very little or no per diem staff remaining and 2 personnel on duty is insufficient to run safely and effectively. The 6 FTE form two groups of 3 working 24 on 24 off which equates to a 84 hour work week. This is a desperate measure for desperate times.

**Health Screening – No Change** – At the beginning and end of each shift personnel shall screen each other for signs of COVID19 by taking each other's temperature and record any signs or symptoms. This means personnel working 10 hour shift will be screened twice. Personnel working a 24 will be screened 3 times etc. The information shall be recorded in the log book located in the kitchen. Anyone with a temperature greater than 100.4 shall notify Captain Grimley or Captain Scott and you will not be allowed to work.

Effective immediately anyone including call members entering the secured area of a Townsend Fire-EMS station shall be screened. Log books and information books have been placed at the Harbor and West Stations. Understandably we do not expect you to screen prior to responding to a call. You must be screened after a calls. ALL MEMBERS are encouraged to conduct self-screenings at home twice daily and to contact Captain Scott or myself if you become symptomatic.

Effective immediately all personnel will wear a face mask while on duty. While performing non-emergency functions handmade masks or bandanas are sufficient. While on ALL emergency calls medical grade surgical masks shall be worn. While responding to medical calls the Highly Infectious Patient SOG shall be followed.

**COVID19 Testing – No Change** – CVS Pharmacy 720 Boston Turnpike in Shrewsbury MA has been closed and 2 new locations have been established for public safety personnel. Gillette Stadium in Foxboro and the Big E Fairground in West Springfield. Both sites are open from 9am to 5pm 7 days a week by appointment scheduled in advanced by the department. Test results for symptomatic personnel will be expedited and provided in 24-48 hours. Asymptomatic personnel will take 3-5 days.

In addition to the two sites above there is a rapid test site in Lowell, located in the parking lot of the Showcase Cinema capable of testing up to 1000 patient per day with results in 15 minutes. This testing is open to the general public and can be schedule on CVS.com. I checked out the site and found they are screening patients online so it is unlikely you will be schedule for a test unless you are symptomatic, have been referred by your PCP or are high risk.

**Training/Meetings – No Change** – All department meetings and training are canceled until further notice. Training and policies related to the COVID19 Pandemic is available on Fire Rescue1 Academy. <https://olt.firerescue1academy.com/login/#login>

Officers have returned to monthly meetings on the last Tuesday of the month at 6pm and will continue to be Zoom virtual meetings until further notice. Additional meeting will be scheduled as needed.

On Duty Personnel at the start of each shift shall review the latest COVID19 information located in the "COVID19 Information and Reference Material" binder also located in the kitchen at the central fire station. Once the material have been reviewed the training log shall be dated and signed.

On-call-personnel are encouraged to stop by the central station to review the information or it can be viewed and acknowledged as being viewed on Fire Rescue 1 Academy. A ton of information is also available in the members only section of the Fire-EMS website.

All personnel shall watch the attached PPE donning and doffing video as soon and possible. This maybe done on Fire Rescue 1. On duty personnel can clicking the link below and complete a training sheet and submitting it to Captain Scott.

<https://utmb.ensemblevideo.com/hapi/v1/contents/permalinks/Nk9n7Q6H/view>

**HOUSING ISOLATION INFORMAION – No Change** - Some of you may have loved ones at home that are elderly or have underlying conditions that put them at risk. I understand you may be concerned they could be exposed to COVID19 as a result of you being on the front lines responding to calls. For this reason we have secured and furnished a 3 bedroom townhouse apartment on Spaulding Street. Fire-EMS personnel seeking housing away from family are encouraged to contact me to make arrangements to stay at this location. Following a statewide conference call the decision was made to make our plan and housing available to our primary mutual aid departments. Ashby, Lunenburg and Pepperell agreed to join as a regional plan making Townsend eligible for state funding for cost. An emergency plan for additional sheltering of regional personnel is as follows:

Phase one – Utilize the currently established Spaulding Street location for healthy firefighters quarantined due to exposure or self-quarantined to not expose high risk family members.

Phase two – Cots have been staged at the Harbor Station for additional housing as needed. For sick or health personnel depending on the need.

Phase three – We have a verbal agreement to utilize a three bedroom apartment on North End Road for housing of sick or healthy personnel depending on the need.

Phase four – If needed we have two RV's available that will be placed behind the Harbor station, hooked up to power and sewer to house sick or healthy personnel as needed.

Note – Spaulding Street will only be used for healthy (asymptomatic) personnel as this location is in the middle of a townhouse. The intent is to have plans to shelter healthy personnel in separate locations than sick to limit exposure. The decision will be made on all other locations depending on the need at the time. It is also the intent to keep sick people out of the Harbor Station if possible.

**EMS PROTOCOL CHANGES – New Category** - OEMS Protocol changes to discourage transport of healthy patients between the ages of 18-55. Please read and review the protocol for further details.

This week OEMS issued an additional protocol change allowing EMT-B to utilize supraglottic airways such as the King airway or combi-tube. Since our basic providers have not been trained to utilize these airways we will NOT be implementing this change.

Transporting patient to the closest appropriate medical facility has been an OEMS statewide protocols for a long time. On occasion we have accommodated and literally gone out of our way to transported to Emerson Hospital at the patient request. Due to COVID19 and to limit exposure we will no longer transport to Emerson unless it is the nearest appropriate facility. We are fortunate to have several hospitals in the area. Routine medicals calls in Townsend maybe transported to Nashoba, Leominster, Southern NH, St. Josephs, or Heywood regardless of the location in town, they are all approximately the same distance. No change to critical care calls, transport to the closest appropriate facility.

#### **GENERAL INFORMATION -**

US Fire administration and Mass Fire Marshal's office has established a special study code in fire reporting. On the basic page of fire report there is now two fields that must be completed to record COVID19 related calls.

DFS has suspended the requirement to conduct school fire drills since schools are not in session and will remain closed the rest of this school year.

Mutual aid and cover assignments – we will do our best to keep you informed. Currently our border towns have no restrictions, it is business as usual. If we go outside our border towns its likely you will be required to remain outside the station with the vehicle and only allowed to enter to use the restrooms.

Until further notice no visitors will be allowed at any of the Fire-EMS Fire stations. This includes friends and family members working nights or weekends.

In the event an ambulance strike team is requested for an out of town response related to COVID19 contact the duty officer for guidance. If we can fulfill the request we will with one ambulance and two personnel only.

In an effort to connect frontline workers with various supports such as free/discounted meals, guidance on accessing PPE and priority testing, emergency child care, and alternate housing options, the Attorney General's Office developed the Frontline Workers Resource website. The website can be accessed [www.frontlinema.org](http://www.frontlinema.org)

***All personnel please take note, this document is a directive and shall be followed by all personnel. Failure to abide by this directive will result in disciplinary action.***