

Stillwater Fire District  
Stillwater, New York

Fire District Policy and Procedure Policy Number: 1 of 2020

Policy Name: Viral Infectious Disease Policy/Procedure

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*This policy has been revised to include the requirements of Section 27-c of the NYS Labor Law*

- 1) **PURPOSE:** The purpose of this policy is to prevent the spread of an infectious disease to fellow first responders or to the public and to prevent the spread of any infectious disease from the public to our first responders and their friends and family.
  - a) We must all be aware of the challenges to limit the spread of an infectious disease among the community of first responders, their family and with those they interact with. We all need to be calm, prudent, compassionate and caring toward our members and members of the public. At the same time, we need to insure continuity of operations in providing the fire protection mission to the residents of the communities which we serve.
  - b) If this policy is being implemented there is an assumption that all people that first responders are coming in contact with are potentially infectious and precautions shall be implemented.
  - c) This planning policy has been developed to satisfy the requirements of NYS Labor Law Section 27-c
- 2) **POLICY:**
  - a) The first step is to assess how and to what extent this emergency situation is going to affect the fire company and the delivery of services to the community.
  - b) The Stakeholders include the Board of Fire Commissioners, the Chief Officers, the fire company members, fire district contractors and providers, family members and others that the fire district members interact with on a regular basis.
  - c) At the first indication of an outbreak the stakeholders or stakeholder representatives need to meet to discuss strategies, identify essential staff, assign job responsibilities and the entire process shall be conducted according to ICS protocols, addressing command, planning, operations, finance administration, logistics and any special functions required.
  - d) Due to unknown factors in response to an infectious disease a liberal purchasing policy accompanied by proper financial and purchasing documentation is required. Documentation for any funds expended to protect life and property shall be collected, maintained and properly recorded for both auditing and potential reimbursement purposes. According to ICS best practices someone shall be assigned the task of Finance Administration to record purchases and personal time invested in a response.
- 3) **PREPAREDNESS ACTIVITIES**
  - a) Shall include mitigative measures that can be taken to lessen the affects from communication of a disease.
  - b) Identify who essential workers are and list the necessary positions along with their job descriptions.
  - c) Non-essential staffing shall remain away from the fire station and shall be communicated with through email or I am Responding from the fire district or the County.
  - d) Essential staff shall report to work and will take any necessary measures to limit the spread of disease and shall disinfect all work surfaces as necessary.

- e) PPE shall be in stock and ready for use. Regular inventory of PPE and disinfectant materials shall be performed to insure that sufficient stock is at the ready. If needed procure additional or replacement stocks and determine where stocks can be purchased.
- f) If needed all facilities will be off limits to the general public, contractors and non-essential personnel except for exigent circumstances.
- g) Determine the methodology for properly disposing of soiled or contaminated PPE or cleaning materials.
- h) Determine any other requirements that may be promulgated by the Department of Health such as contact tracing, social distancing, personal hygiene, disinfection or mask use.
- i) If sufficient staffing resources are unavailable develop contingency plans to obtain sufficient resources for any given incident.
- j) Identify a source of gross decontamination of facilities and apparatus should the need arise.

#### **4) OPERATIONS**

- a) Incidents shall be screened and at an incident that normally requires minimal fire company response personnel (such as carbon monoxide with **NO** sickness, gas leaks with **NO** exposure issues, odor complaints, EMS lift assist, other EMS assist requests and others) officers and incident commanders shall limit exposure to as few personnel as possible. (A limited emergency response)
  - i) Carbon Monoxide incidents shall employ as few personal as possible. Responders should be aware that CO and influenza share similar signs and symptoms. As such victims complaining of physical symptoms during a CO incident shall be treated as potentially infected victims.
  - ii) Prior to entering a structure in a limited emergency response inquire from the caller if there is anyone in the structure has been exposed to someone having the disease or is exhibiting symptoms of the disease. Is this a structure where occupants are being quarantined? If illness or exposure is present responders shall don protective clothing as appropriate, which may include full PPE and SCBA to avoid exposure.
  - iii) Post incident; at a structure where there is a known exposure, either properly dispose of temporary protective clothing as a biological waste or decontaminate clothing and SCBA according to best practices, manufacturer's recommendations or by the recommendations of the local health department. Always verify instructions for credibility.
  - iv) Upon arrival, allow only one (1) first responder to enter the structure with the ability to request specific additional resources as necessary. All other responders shall remain with the apparatus until requested.
  - v) Post incident when there has been an incident where there is expected exposure decontaminate all equipment utilized according to manufacturer's recommendations or upon best practices using disinfectant methods and solutions compatible with the equipment being decontaminated. Out of an abundance of caution, equipment should always be properly decontaminated.
- b) If as a first responder, you have been exposed to the infectious disease or you have symptoms you must take the following actions to protect yourself and others:
  - i) As a first responder, take actions to be tested for an infectious disease and obtain the proper care.
  - ii) Self-quarantine away from others for the recommended period of time associated with the particular strain of the infectious disease.
  - iii) Notify those you have come in contact with and particularly the incident commander or officer in charge of the incident you responded to. This is so that others may be notified and subsequent exposures do not occur.

- iv) If you have had a known accidental expose at the scene of an event, you will be provided separate transportation to limit exposures to others. It is appropriate to wear a mask (N95 if available, surgical mask or other as available) to limit droplet exposure to others.
- v) If exposed volunteer fire company first responders are covered by VFBL (workman's comp) for testing, treatment and lost employment during quarantine. Documentation of the exposure should be filed and a VF1 document shall be appropriately filed with the VFBL carrier or their authorized representative within the required time period.
- c) It is recommended that:
  - i) If you are not feeling well, do not respond. Do not place others at risk.
  - ii) If you have symptoms seek professional medical attention. Contact your medical provider before going to their medical office to receive directions to limit exposure to others.
  - iii) Do not return to active duty until you feel better and have been tested with no positive lab tests, two positive tests in a 24-hour period.
  - iv) Respond to only the fire station that you live closest to, do not visit any other stations to limit exposures.
- d) Once an incident has been mitigated, the apparatus, equipment used, PPE, SCBA and possibly portions of the station will need to be disinfected if there is the potential that there has been contact with an affected person at the incident. Decon equipment using best practices or following the manufacturer's instructions. For equipment receiving a sprayed on disinfectant, let the disinfectant dry naturally do not wipe it off; allow it to dry naturally. Contingencies and alternatives include the use of a commercial disinfectant provider.
  - i) Agencies should place special focus on the training of personnel on the proper cleaning of SCBA face pieces and regulators.
  - ii) All "high touch" areas of the apparatus shall be disinfected after each incident with the appropriate disinfectant.
  - iii) Continue the suggested protocols from the CDC or local health department and wash your hands with soap and water for 2 minutes, regularly. Don't touch your face and cover your cough.
  - iv) After preparing for the next incident, leave the fire station and wash your hands.
  - v) If you or a member of your family become quarantined or test positive for the infectious disease notify a chief officer as soon as possible and remain self-quarantined for the recommended period of time.
- e) Diluted household bleach solutions can be used if appropriate for the surface to be disinfected. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for proper application and ventilation. Never mix bleach with any other cleaning products due to possible adverse reactions.
  - i) Be sure to properly dilute household bleach or sodium hypochlorite (NaClO) solutions before use. Remember that sodium hypochlorite is 3x stronger than household bleach.
    - (1) Note that sodium hypochlorite is a strong oxidant that reacts with flammable compounds and reducing agents, and it is flammable.
  - ii) If using household bleach use five (5) tablespoons (or 1/3<sup>rd</sup> cup) per one (1) gallon of water or 1 tablespoon of bleach to one (1) quart of water. If using sodium hypochlorite use a 9:1 ratio, nine (9) parts water to one (1) part sodium hypochlorite which is still a strong solution.
  - iii) Disinfectants should remain on the surface they are being used on for several minutes to give them time to disinfect.
  - iv) While using disinfectants personal protective equipment to be worn is; splash eye protection, impervious gloves and work in a well-ventilated space.
- f) Depending on the demographic impact of the infectious disease, agencies should strongly consider having members in the negatively affected age group refrain from responding.

- g) During an infectious disease outbreak, members should follow best practices without being negatively impacted in reference to the consequences of their LOSAP credits.
- h) Social distancing protocols shall be put in place and all regular non-essential meetings, training, committee meetings, or other social interactions shall be canceled, postponed, re-scheduled or suspended.
- i) Limit station attendance and no guests including family shall be permitted in any facilities during the recommended social distancing period to limit potential exposures.
- j) It is recommended that a change of clothing be stored in your locker in the event that contaminated clothing needs to be removed for cleaning. Don't carry contaminated clothing home without being bagged.
- k) Thought should be given to closing any non-essential areas of the fire station to limit exposure in the event that a full building decontamination needs to be performed.

**l) Cleaning and Sanitizing Turnout Gear Procedures**

- i) Wherever possible, refer to manufacturer cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting instructions.
- ii) Seek advice from the manufacturer on appropriate cleaning agents, sanitizers or disinfectants and processes and their limitations, if not addressed in the instructions.
- iii) Clean and sanitize any element of structural firefighting protective clothing in accordance with procedures established in NFPA 1851 these procedures include:
  - (1) Launder garments in a programmable, front-loading washer/ extractor that has ample capacity for the wash load.
  - (2) Use a pre-soak stage of at least 10 minutes with an EPA- approved laundry sanitizer additive. n Use sanitizer at concentration and application per supplier instructions.
  - (3) Follow the pre-soak with draining the washer/extractor and a 4-minute extraction step.
  - (4) Wash garments with an appropriate detergent and multiple rinse cycles but apply specialized cleaning at the maximum wash temperature up to 140oF
  - (5) Dry garments by air drying, using a drying cabinet or applying machine drying on a no heat or air-dry option or
  - (6) Use an Independent Service Provider (ISP) for conducting, sanitization and specialized cleaning of PPE.
  - (7) Currently, there are no known effective methods for field disinfection of structural PPE to continue its use without taking the PPE out of service. While there are some potential practices that are quickly being investigated, any approach to field disinfect gear must be exercised with the utmost caution for potentially compromising gear performance or creating health issues.

**5) RECOVERY ACTIVITIES**

- a) As the incident evolves and devolves, the stakeholders shall develop a demobilizations plan
  - i. The plan shall include the pace of the resumption of regular activities considering the actions that need to continue to keep all responders and staff safe.
  - ii. The plan needs to indicate the pace at which the fire company will return to normal depending on the progression of the disease and the measures being taken to protect members, contractors and the general public.
  - iii. Identify any long term activities that may need to be executed, who will execute them, how they will be executed and the process to continue to evaluate and report on progress of the demobilization.
  - iv. What new or revised protocols need to be instituted going forward and who do they apply to.