



**NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

Roy Cooper
Governor

Tracy S. Doaks
Secretary and State Chief Information Officer

March 13, 2020

N.C. PSAP Managers

RE: First Responder Preparedness and Mitigation Initiatives – COVID-19

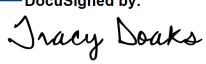
To our local first response partners:

The N.C. Office of EMS, N.C. Office of State Fire Marshal, N.C. Sheriff's Association, N.C. Association of Police Chiefs, N.C. Department of Information Technology 911 Board, and N.C. Division of Emergency Management, all are working closely to ensure all first responder agencies are receiving timely and complete information on how to best be prepared for the COVID-19 response. By working together, we can ensure that we are all prepared to support one another and mitigate the impacts of the potential for widespread transmission of COVID-19 throughout the state.

It is imperative for us all to implement basic infection prevention controls as well as mitigation strategies to minimize the impacts to the critical services we all provide. The attached guidance documents should help provide specific checklists to aid in agency preparedness and protection of first responders as well as ask specific questions and considerations to aid in community planning. Please share the attached guidance documents with your staff to help ensure we are all doing everything we can to keep everyone informed.

Please ensure you communicate your needs to your local emergency management office to ensure we maintain the highest level of services to our citizens and visitors of this state.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

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Tracy Doaks
Secretary and State Chief Information Officer

Enclosures

it.nc.gov

4101 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-4101



NORTH CAROLINA STATE EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM

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Agency Actions for COVID-19 Exposures

Step 1: If employee(s) are potentially exposed to a COVID-19 patient then reach out to your [local health department](#) for guidance.

Step 2: If any employee(s) are requested to quarantine/isolate by a local health department / occupational health or greater than 10% of your agency workforce is unable to come to work due to work related exposures please ensure your agency contacts the following:

1. Local Health Department
2. Local Emergency Manager
3. Report the following critical data points via the below NC ReadyOp Webform -
<https://nc.readyop.com/fs/4cgp/66ec>
 - a. County
 - b. Agency
 - c. POC
 - d. Number/type of first responder
 - e. Impact to operations
 - f. Any follow up needed?
 - g. Any additional pertinent information?

Step 3: If you have an urgent need for additional guidance or support, please contact the State Emergency Operations Center at 919-733-3300.

All Resource requests must go through your local emergency management.



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Agency Preparedness Checklist

All public safety agencies should be prepared to evaluate citizens that they may interact with for new and emerging infectious disease threats such as COVID-19. Agencies should begin preparing now by reviewing protocols, policies, and procedures applicable for responding to emerging infectious disease/highly infectious disease.

The following checklist highlights some key areas for agencies to consider in preparation for response to COVID-19. The checklist format is not intended to set forth mandatory requirements or establish national standards. While many of the below items are for those with direct contact with potentially infectious patients, all agency should consider implementing control measures such as regular cleaning of commonly touched equipment, door handles, and phones/radios.

- ☐ Monitor the situation at CDC's COVID-19 [website](#), North Carolina Department of Health & Human Services [website](#), and your [local health department](#).
- ☐ Ensure agency infection control policies are consistent with the CDC's [COVID-19 infection prevention guidance](#).
- ☐ Review protocols, policies and procedures for rapidly implementing appropriate infection prevention practices for potential COVID-19.

For example:

- Placement of necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) for responders within all prehospital provider response vehicles and initial response bags
 - Proper donning and doffing of personal protective equipment
 - Updating infection prevention training for employees
- ☐ Review hand hygiene policies and supplies (e.g., accessible alcohol-based hand rub).
 - ☐ Review supplies of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) based on your agency infection control policy:
 - ☐ NIOSH-approved respirator such as an N-95 respirator or Positive Air Purifying Respirator (PAPR) – necessary for procedures creating respiratory aerosols (e.g. nebulizers, intubations etc.)
 - ☐ Surgical Masks
 - ☐ Eye protection (e.g. goggles or disposable face shield that fully covers the front and sides of the face)
 - ☐ Isolation Gowns
 - ☐ Patient Exam Gloves (single pair or disposable gloves)



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- ☐ Ensure Prehospital Providers who will provide patient care have been medically cleared, fit-tested, and trained for respirator use.
- ☐ Review policies and procedures for screening and work restrictions for exposed or ill providers including ensuring that they have ready access, including via telephone, to medical consultation.
- ☐ Provide education and training to prehospital providers regarding COVID-19 diagnosis, how to limit exposures, appropriate PPE use, and effective communication with receiving healthcare facilities, sick leave policies, and how and to whom suspected COVID-19 cases should be reported within your agency along with procedures to take following unprotected exposures (e.g. not wearing recommended PPE).
- ☐ Review plans for implementation of surge capacity procedures and management of scarce resources.
- ☐ Review supplies of appropriate cleaning and disinfection products (e.g. EPA-registered disinfectant appropriate for coronavirus in healthcare settings).



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Continuity Planning Guide for First Responders

Protecting First Responders & their families:

The North Carolina State Emergency Response Team (SERT) is committed to providing important information and guidance to first response agencies to help protect our first responders and their families. These individuals play a vital role in responding to calls for service and protecting our citizens.

Utilization of a layered effect: Infection Control, Workplace Protection & Community Mitigation create multiple layers of protective measures against exposure to lower respiratory viruses for our first responder. Below are some key areas that should be considered by all agencies to help protect our first responders¹:

Infection Control:

1. Handwashing & sanitizer use
2. Cover your cough
3. Practice social distancing

Workplace Protection:

1. Encourage sick employees to stay at home
2. Keep work surfaces and equipment disinfected
 - a. Pay special attention to common surfaces such as phones, door handles, radios, steering wheels, ext.
3. Use technology for updates and information exchange instead of in-person meetings
4. Limit visitors and family to workplace
5. Personal Protective Equipment where indicated
 - a. Consider cleaning equipment and uniforms (if soiled with potentially infectious materials) between calls where subjects have a fever or other signs of infection
6. Increase ventilation in police cruisers and ambulances by operating the system in a non-recirculation mode and when possible bringing in as much outdoor air as possible
7. Early recognition of employees that are ill is important to protecting your entire staff

Community Mitigation:

1. Isolation, treatment, voluntary home quarantine of those with confirmed or potential lower respiratory illness (fever with a cough or other signs of illness)
2. Voluntary closure of non-essential business functions / consider telework when appropriate
 - a. Especially for high risk populations such as those who are older than 65 or have cardiac/respiratory issues, diabetes, and/or a compromised immune system.

¹ <https://www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/dhs-comprehensive-first-responder-pandemic-guide-pandemic.pdf>



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In addition to the utilization of this layered approach we would encourage first response agencies to begin preplanning now for how you will alter operations to ensure readiness and response should you have a reduction in staff due to the COVID-19 response.

We would encourage each agency to preplan how they would ensure completion of mission essential functions based on a **25%** and **40%** reduction in workforce.

Preplanning for reduction in workforce should include the following:

1. What are the **core/essential tasks** within your agency?
2. What **unit** delivers that task?
3. Current **number of personnel on staff** completing that core tasks:
4. List any **necessary changes in operations** to continue performing this task (based on 25% and 40% reduction):
5. Do the changes in operations **meet the standard delivery of care**: Yes or No?
6. **Minimum number of people** required to ensure completion of a core task
7. Specific **skills necessary**
8. Specific **technologies** needed to replicate operations external of the normal work environment.