

## Falmouth Fire-EMS Operating Guideline

### COVID-19 Response

**Purpose:** To provide guidance for responding to, and managing, responses to suspected or confirmed COVID-19 positive patients.

#### General Information (from Maine CDC):

COVID-19 was first detected in December 2019. For some, the respiratory virus causes mild symptoms like the common cold or influenza (flu), for others it can cause severe pneumonia that requires medical care or hospitalization. The virus is named "SARS-CoV-2" and the disease it causes is named "coronavirus disease 2019" (abbreviated "COVID-19"). Symptoms of COVID-19 may appear 2-14 days after exposure and may include:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing.
- Fatigue
- Muscle or Body Aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

Most patients experience mild symptoms and can recuperate at home, but others, particularly those with underlying medical conditions, may experience severe respiratory illness. The virus appears to spread in similar ways to influenza (flu) and the common cold. This may include:

- The air by coughing and sneezing.
- Close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands.
- Touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes
- The virus can spread from person-to-person and in some locations, there is apparent community spread, meaning some people are infected and are not sure how or where they became infected.

There are simple steps you can take to reduce the possible spread of COVID-19 and other illnesses such as influenza and the common cold:

1. Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
2. Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
3. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
4. Stay home while you are sick and avoid close contact with others.

Currently there are vaccines available and approved by the US CDC to prevent the spread of COVID-19. All EMS providers and firefighters have been given the opportunity to receive a vaccine. All members are highly encouraged to obtain a vaccination and a booster when available.

Falmouth Fire-EMS will follow CDC guidelines, Town of Falmouth policies, and Maine EMS Protocols when determining when our members need to wear masks and other preventative personal protective equipment.

### **Guidelines:**

#### **1. Monitor Symptoms**

- All members are asked to monitor themselves for potential COVID-19 symptoms before the start of a shift (fulltime, per diem, volunteer), or before responding to a call or training (call staff). Any symptoms or a temperature above 100.4 degrees F will require the member to stay home.

#### **2. Response to calls for suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patient(s)**

- PPE to be worn for Response to EMS Calls shall be in accordance with Maine EMS Guidelines.
  - Minimum PPE worn by responders for suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patients is:
    - Gloves, Eye protection, N95, Gown (if contact with patient)
    - In accordance with facility requirements (hospitals, nursing homes, etc.)
- Minimize contact of patient / public during calls
  - Stand at the door to investigate, whenever possible
  - Bring the patient / public outside, if possible
- Minimum interaction with patient
  - If suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patient = 1 attendant (if possible)
    - If it is a crew of 3 and a suspected or confirmed positive patient the 3<sup>rd</sup> provider may sit in the front passenger seat during transport
- Ask the following questions of all contacted members of the public (fire or EMS call):
  - Have you or anyone in the house had any of the following:
    - Fever
    - Symptoms of lower respiratory illness (ex. Shortness of breath or cough)
    - If answered yes, assume potential COVID-19 on site and wear appropriate PPE.
- EMS 1<sup>st</sup> Response
  - EMS first responders may not enter a building with a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patient unless wearing proper full PPE as described above.

- Requests for additional help (lifting, etc.) will be kept to a minimum (if requested)
- Engine Company crew, if called to a scene, will wear the same PPE as required by EMS for potential COVID-19 patients (gloves, eye protection, N95, gown (if contact with patient)). Fire PPE not a substitute.
- All responders must document any potential COVID-19 exposure in EMS Reports including what PPE was worn by each provider. Document all changes during the incident.

### 3. Reporting Potential COVID-19 Exposure at Work

- CDC defines an exposure to COVID-19 as within 6 feet of a symptomatic individual for greater than 15 minutes.
- Other potential COVID-19 exposures include:
  - If no PPE or insufficient PPE is worn at an incident involving a suspected or known COVID-19 positive patient.
  - If a breach of PPE occurs at an incident involving a suspected or known COVID-19 positive patient.
- If potential COVID-19 exposure is suspected:
  - Contact Fire Chief or designee immediately.
  - Immediately don a mask.
  - Practice social distancing
  - Await guidance from the Fire Chief or designee.

### 4. Reporting Potential COVID-19 Exposure Away from Work

- If potential COVID-19 exposure is suspected and/or a member of Falmouth Fire-EMS has been directed to self-quarantine by an outside agency or health care provider:
  - Contact the Fire Chief or designee.
  - Do not come to the fire station.
  - Do not respond to any fire or EMS calls.
  - Await guidance from the Fire Chief or designee.

### 5. Self-Quarantine Policy

- The Fire Chief or designee will make the final determination of whether a member of Falmouth Fire-EMS enters self-quarantine. If sent to self-quarantine:
  - Members do not report to work at the fire department or visit any of town buildings.
  - Do not respond to any fire or EMS calls.
  - Do not attend meetings or training events in person.
  - If appropriate, follow guidance from Maine CDC and Maine EMS / Epidemiology.

#### 6. Returning to Work after being Quarantined

- The Fire Chief or designee will make the final determination of whether a member of Falmouth Fire-EMS who was in self-quarantine may return to work at Falmouth Fire-EMS.

#### 7. Monitoring Staff Wellness

- All crews are asked to monitor themselves before the beginning of every shift and while on shift to check for potential COVID-19 symptoms (every 12-hours).
- If any symptoms of COVID-19 are discovered before a shift starts, employee to remain away from work and contact Fire Chief or designee.
  - Symptoms to include:
    - Fever
    - New or Worsening Cough
    - Shortness of Breath
    - Sore Throat

#### 8. Meetings / Training

- No meetings or gatherings that do not follow town and state guidelines can be held at Falmouth Fire-EMS.
- Falmouth Fire-EMS will use online meeting programs like Zoom, GoToMeeting, Facetime, Skype in place of in-person meetings and trainings whenever possible.

#### 9. Visitors to buildings

- All visitors must follow Town of Falmouth guidelines in our fire stations.
  - Walk-in patients and visitors should enter the Central Station front lobby for assistance.
  - The number of members meeting the public will be limited when possible.
  - Social distancing guidelines will be kept.
- The following doors are to remain closed and locked at all times:
  - Door from Central Front Hallway to Dayroom.
  - Door from Central Training Room to Bays.
  - All outside doors at all stations except Central Main Door which will be open from 0800-1630 hours.

#### 10. Station Precautions and Disinfection

- All surfaces in public and crew areas should be cleaned and disinfected at the start of each shift.
- Assigned apparatus for the shift should be cleaned and disinfected at the start of each shift.
- After all calls
  - Clean / disinfect all surface in all apparatus that responded to the call.

- Clean / disinfect any SCBA used, even for only a few moments.
- Clean / disinfect any hand tools or equipment used on the call.
- Reminder to all members to practice good hand hygiene after the call.

#### 11. Modified Emergency Response

- Falmouth Fire-EMS may use a modified emergency response to Fire and EMS calls as deemed necessary by the Fire Chief.

These guidelines may be changed or altered by the Fire-EMS Chief at any time.