



The EHSF would like our EMS agencies to know the Department of Health is the lead regarding information about the Coronavirus. The EHSF has disseminated information provided by the Bureau of EMS for EMS agencies to date.

However, we understand there are a variety of questions and concerns among the EMS community. Therefore, we plan to provide our EMS agencies at minimum a weekly update on the Coronavirus.

Additionally, the EHSF is preparing through the review of the Regional Continuity of Operations (COOP) Plan in the event of a disruption to EMS resources within our regional system. The EHSF is working with partners to evaluate nontraditional measures, but at this time the only change implemented involves the screening of at risk chief complaints by the 9-1-1 Centers.

This update will provide some basic information and current status. Everything within this update can be disseminated to providers and other EMS stakeholders.

Here is the link to a listing of EMS Information Bulletins (EMSIBs): <https://www.ehsf.org/ems-information-bulletins/>. The two EMSIBs with information from the Bureau of EMS related to coronavirus are EMSIB 2020-01 Novel coronavirus 2019-nCoV and EMSIB 2020-02 Infection Control.

As of the time this document was written (Thursday, 03/12/2020 at 1900 hours), there are not been any confirmed cases of coronavirus within the 8-county region of EHSF. However, in Pennsylvania there are currently 20 presumptive positive cases and 2 confirmed cases. Please know the number of cases can change frequently.

You can monitor the coronavirus in Pennsylvania at this link:  
<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx>

#### **What is the difference between presumptive positive and confirmed?**

According to the CDC, a presumptive positive case is an individual with at least one respiratory specimen that tested positive for the virus that causes COVID-19 at a state or local laboratory. Once the specimen is tested positive at a CDC laboratory, then the case is considered confirmed positive.

#### **What does it mean if a patient or someone in the home is self-quarantined?**

The Department of Health is selecting individuals to self-quarantine. This means the DOH identified this individual as a risk for coronavirus because of their previous travel history or potential exposure to another individual with coronavirus. Individuals are asked to self-quarantine even if they are asymptomatic.

#### **How is coronavirus different from influenza?**

Influenza and coronavirus are similar. However, when an individual is infected with the influenza virus, they do not become infectious until they experience symptoms. However, an individual can be carrying the coronavirus and infecting other people through contact without experiencing any symptoms.



Additionally, experts are identifying the coronavirus is remaining in the air longer than the influenza virus, thus increasing risk of exposure.

#### **What are the symptoms of coronavirus?**

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

#### **What should EMS do?**

EMS providers should familiarize themselves with proper PPE. EMS providers should review how to properly put on (donning) and take off (doffing) PPE when treating patients.

EMS providers should consider eliminating facial hair to avoid an inadequate fit of the N95 mask.

EMS providers should revert to basic training of scene safety and BSI. When EMS arrives on scene, EMS should consider screening the patient for coronavirus risks from a distance prior to patient contact (i.e. Is the patient or someone in the house self-quarantined? Has the patient had recent traveled? Has the patient had contact with someone at risk? Does the patient has symptoms?) If EMS suspects a risk, then PPE should be applied prior to patient contact.

When EMS encounters a patient with suspected coronavirus early notification to the hospital emergency department is critical. The hospital personnel will provide instructions for transfer of care.

#### **How does EMS decontaminate the vehicle?**

If EMS transports a patient with suspected coronavirus, proper decontamination of the unit is paramount. The Bureau of EMS provided the following guidance.

- After transporting the patient, leave the rear doors of the transport vehicle open to allow for sufficient air changes to remove infectious particles.
  - The time to complete transfer of the patient to the receiving facility and documentation should be sufficient time to provide air changes.
- When cleaning the vehicle, EMS providers should wear a disposable gown and gloves. A face shield of facemask and goggle should also be worn.
- Ensure that the environmental cleaning and disinfection procedures are followed consistently and correctly to include the provision of adequate ventilation when chemicals are in use. The doors should remain open when cleaning the vehicle.
- Routine cleaning and disinfection procedures (e.g., using cleaners and water to pre-clean surfaces prior to applying an EPA-registered, hospital-grade disinfectant to frequently touched surfaces or objects for appropriate contact times as indicated on the product's label) are appropriate for 2019-nCoV in healthcare settings, including those patient-care areas in which aerosol-generating procedures are performed.
- Products with EPA-approved emerging viral pathogens claims are recommended for use against 2019-nCoV. These products can be identified by the following claim:



- “[Product name] has demonstrated effectiveness against viruses similar to 2019-nCoV on hard non-porous surfaces. Therefore, this product can be used against 2019-nCoV when used in accordance with the directions for use against [name of supporting virus] on hard, non-porous surfaces.”
- This claim or a similar claim, will be made only through the following communications outlets: technical literature distributed exclusively to health care facilities, physicians, nurses and public health officials, “1-800” consumer information services, social media sites and company websites (non-label related). Specific claims for “2019-nCoV” will not appear on the product or master label.
- See additional information about EPA-approved emerging viral pathogens claims.
- If there are no available EPA-registered products that have an approved emerging viral pathogen claim, products with label claims against human coronaviruses should be used according to label instructions.
- Clean and disinfect the vehicle in accordance with standard operating procedures. All surfaces that may have come in contact with the patient or materials contaminated during patient care (e.g., stretcher, rails, control panels, floors, walls, work surfaces) should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected using an EPA-registered hospital grade disinfectant in accordance with the product label.
- Clean and disinfect reusable patient-care equipment before use on another patient, according to manufacturer’s instructions.
- Follow standard operating procedures for the containment and disposal of used PPE and regulated medical waste.
- Follow standard operating procedures for containing and laundering used linen. Avoid shaking the linen.

**Helpful Information:**

You can learn more about the coronavirus on the CDC’s website at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>