



CITY OF AUGUSTA FIRE DEPARTMENT

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Standing Order COVID-19

DATE: May 6, 2020
TO: All Employees
FROM: Chief Roger Audette
RE: COVID-19 Station Safety Practices

This is in effect as of May 6, 2020

Employee Health & Safety is our #1 and highest priority. With safety in mind, we are increasing our steps to protect all staff from the spread of COVID-19. With the information gathered from the recent outbreak at the Augusta Center for Health and Rehabilitation, updated CDC guidelines and the latest Executive Order from the Governor, we have found it critical to take additional step. The Fire station is a form of congregate living and requires additional action to protect each other, our families, and the public that we serve.

Definitions:

- **Cloth face covering:** Textile (cloth) covers that are intended to keep the person wearing one from spreading respiratory secretions when talking, sneezing, or coughing. They are not PPE and it is uncertain whether cloth face coverings protect the wearer. Guidance on design, use, and maintenance of cloth face coverings is available.
- **Facemask:** Facemasks are PPE and are often referred to as surgical masks or procedure masks. Use facemasks according to product labeling and local, state, and federal requirements. FDA-cleared surgical masks are designed to protect against splashes and sprays and are prioritized for use when such exposures are anticipated, including surgical procedures. Facemasks that are not regulated by FDA, such as some procedure masks, which are typically used for isolation purposes, may not provide protection against splashes and sprays.

Screening Updates & Clarifications:

During the pre-work screening process, it is expected that you will drive up to the side door and remain in your vehicle for the screening, do not get out of the vehicle and come

to the door. There have been updated symptoms associated with COVID-19 and new guidance has been released from CDC and Maine EMS. The new language is below.

Symptoms of lower respiratory illness
(e.g., new/worsening cough or shortness
of breath)

Or at least 2 of the following:
Sore Throat; Fever; Chills; Repeated
shaking with chills; Muscle Pain;
Headache; New loss of taste or smell.

It is expected that the Lieutenant will review all the symptoms with the person being screened. They will only provide the person with the probe of the thermometer and not hand them the entire device. The thermometer needs to be wiped down between each person screened (alcohol preps are acceptable).

After screening is complete, you can report to the assigned station. When entering the station, you must be wearing a cloth face covering at a minimum and report to the closest hand washing facility to complete proper hand hygiene. After this you may report for duty.

Masking on Duty

With the fire station being a type of congregate living building and a workplace, we are implementing a new masking policy. You will be expected to wear, at a minimum, a cloth face covering when in common areas of the building or if you are interacting with anyone inside a 6-foot distance. For this policy, bunkrooms will not be considered a common area. The Battalion Chiefs bunkroom/office will require the use of masks, if more than one person is in the room. Cloth face coverings are intended to protect others from you spreading any potential infection when talking, coughing, or sneezing. Cloth face covering masks are not to be worn on EMS or fire call responses. This is to decrease the potential of the cloth mask being contaminated on a call. They may be worn when picking up supplies at Hartford or on a store run.

Cleaning of cloth face coverings will be done when cleaning uniforms. If you need to use a surgical facemask while cleaning your cloth mask, you may do so. Please use every effort to conserve facemasks, reuse them for as long as you can. If it is being worn as a backup to your cloth mask, you should be able to get multiple shifts with the same mask.

Use caution with doffing and re-donning of masks. Your storage of the mask should be in a safe place and consider potential contamination when doing so.

Mealtimes will be a challenging time for us. If shift meals are planned, crews must distance at least 6-feet apart while eating. This is not as much an issue at substations, but Hartford crews will have to spread out and not all sit at the table. Utilization of the table, counter seating and either recliners or additional desk tables from the training room can be set up in the room.

With food preparation and sharing of food, do not place a hand into a bag of chips or similar items to be shared, dump into bowls for each person. If it is not your bowl, do not eat from it.

Crew Separation

In the beginning of this process we isolated rescue crews from fire apparatus crews with the intent of lessening the risk of potential exposure to the duty crew. While we are in this phase, the intention is to not have crews entering different stations. Rescue crews should not be entering the EMS supply room or common areas of Hartford Station. Conversely, crew members from Hartford, officers included, should not be entering areas of the other stations. When EMS supplies are needed, call ahead to Hartford with a list and a crew member there will put your needed supplies out for you. They will be located on the table inside the old bay back door. Crews should not proceed past that point. When there is an item that needs to be dropped at a substation it should be left at the entrance, do not take the item past the entry way. We should limit any time spent at non assigned stations to only drop offs and pick-ups.

Crew members should limit exposure to other members assigned to the same station. Try to maintain a 6-foot distance when possible. Masks will be required in common areas of the buildings; this excludes bunkrooms and bathrooms only. In individual offices, when occupied only by the staff assigned to the office, they may choose to have their mask off, if someone is to come to the room for any reason, all occupants must be wearing masks.

Training will continue as normal with LMS training. Hands on training will be limited to critical issues only. Swing qualification training and testing will continue as planned. As much training as possible should be done with video or presentations on LMS. Any hands-on training will be limited to small groups and masks will be required even in an outdoor setting. These trainings should only be for new equipment or tasks and not done as an annual review, unless required by Federal, State or insurance regulations.

Surface Cleaning

It is critical that all contact surfaces are cleaned daily. This should be done early in the shift before you start using items and workspaces. We will continue to utilize the daily mixed bleach solution and Clorox wipes on computers.

Surface cleaning includes assigned apparatus and rescues. At the beginning of vehicle checks, wipe downs should be done first, this includes the cabs of all vehicles (rescues and apparatus). All other workspaces, including computer areas, kitchens, etc. should be cleaned before using them. Limiting the potential exposure from shift to shift is critical, this requires early cleaning of all high-risk surfaces.

Illness Reporting

It is critical to our continued safety that all employees report any symptoms during screening and throughout the day if something changes. We have seen with area outbreaks that symptoms may be very vague. We are all safer if vague symptoms are reported and reviewed ahead of time. Our collective health is crucial to the mission we fulfill every day.

Closing Statement

Working together to keep each other safe and healthy will allow us to serve the public in their time of need. I understand that this policy brings some significant changes to our life at work. They are all in place to protect each other and those we serve. Our COVID-19 Team will continue to work on your behalf to provide all the necessary items to keep you safe at work. I ask that you take these steps seriously and utilize all provided PPE as set forth in guidance. We have already seen one positive case within our Department, these additional steps will help in containing any potential spread should another case arise within our ranks.

All the work that we do in-house to help prevent infection can only be truly realized if you are utilizing the same safety measure while off duty. The Governor's executive order does require the use of cloth face covering when in public spaces. We hope that you will have the same diligence for safety while off duty. Your actions can and do affect everyone you work with.

Thank you all for the hard work that you are putting in during these difficult times. We are all faced with stresses we are not accustomed to in our daily work environments. Your emotional health is as important as your physical health. There are many resources available if you are in need. Reaching out for help is a sign of personal strength and not a weakness. If you are not comfortable reaching out to any of the officers in the department, our Human Resources department is available at (207) 626-2353. Maine EMS and Maine CDC have put together a resource for healthcare and first responders in need. It is referenced below in the graphic. Please stay safe and continue the strong work you have been doing.

If you have any questions about this policy, please reach out to Chief Leach 207-446-0386 or me 207-458-2828 for clarification.

