

August 23, 2020

Dear State of Maine Fire Chiefs and EMS Directors,

The Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Maine Emergency Medical Services (EMS) are aware of an increase in the number of cases of COVID-19 among first responders in York County. At present, we are aware of at least four (4) confirmed cases of COVID-19 involving firefighters and/or EMS clinicians. In addition, several other individuals have been placed in quarantine following exposures to first responders affected by COVID-19.

At this time, Maine CDC has not determined the cause of these cases, though an epidemiological investigation is underway. In the meantime, Maine CDC and Maine EMS would like to remind all Fire Chiefs and EMS Directors of required practices in light of COVID-19. These practices are designed to ensure that first responders and those whom they serve in the community remain healthy.

1. Review and report required events, including but not limited to quarantined clinicians, positive test results, hospitalizations, and removal from quarantine, to Maine CDC and Maine EMS as soon as possible and no later than 24 hours following identification as required by Emergency Rule 10-144 CMR Ch. 124 and as detailed in [Maine EMS Operational Bulletin No. 2020-04-23-01](#).
2. Fire departments and/or EMS agencies should continue to conduct screenings in accordance with the [guidance issued in mid-March](#) including the most current signs and symptoms identified by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
3. Any first responder who becomes symptomatic in any way should be removed from service immediately, seek COVID-19 testing, and remain at home until they have a negative test result and have been asymptomatic for at least 24 hours or have completed the appropriate quarantine based on their situation (See [Return to Work Guidance](#)).
4. Universal masking is required of all first responders when interacting with patients (See [Operational Bulletin No. 2020-06-16-01U1](#)). This includes wearing at least a surgical mask and eye protection on all interactions and, in instances when the patient is exhibiting signs and/or symptoms consistent with COVID-19, wearing full aerosol personal protective equipment (PPE) including an N95 respirator, or higher, eye protection, gown, and gloves. To help mitigate the spread within the station and EMS barracks, Maine CDC and Maine EMS recommend the use of face coverings or masks while in the stations in between emergency calls.
5. EMS clinicians/firefighters who are known [contacts](#) of individuals with confirmed COVID-19 should be placed in quarantine. We understand that executing this could place a significant burden on your agency. If you must, your organization may continue to utilize individuals who are negative and asymptomatic; however, they must remain masked and wear eye protection at all times. For such close contacts of confirmed cases, arrange living quarters so that people are sleeping in separate rooms. These procedures should remain in place until at least 14 days following the last unprotected exposure to a known positive (See [Crisis Capacity Strategies to Mitigate Staffing Shortages](#) from U.S.

CDC). It is important to note that while these individuals may work by this crisis standard, outside of the fire department and/or EMS agency they should remain in quarantine until at least 14 days following exposure to the laboratory-confirmed positive COVID-19 individual.

6. If your department or service utilizes ENVO masks, it is imperative that you cover the exhalation ports to prevent COVID-19 spread to patients or other first responders (See [Operational Bulletin No. 2020-08-21-01](#)).
7. Please contact your local and/or county emergency management agency if you require additional PPE that you are unable to readily source from your traditional channels. While first responder organizations are prioritized for PPE distributions, it should be utilized as a source of last resort.
8. Feel free to reach out to Maine EMS if you have any questions or concerns via email at maine.ems@maine.gov or via phone at 207.626.3860.

We understand that there is likely immense response fatigue associated with this ongoing pandemic. We ask that you continue to encourage your firefighters and clinicians to remain vigilant in their heroic response to this pandemic. As we, globally, learn more about this virus and its disease process, guidance, recommendations, and procedures will likely change; however, we are doing our best to keep you apprised of the most current and sound science to keep you, your teams, their families, and your communities safe. All of us at Maine EMS, Maine CDC, and the State Fire Marshal's Office immensely appreciate your continued dedication to the people we all serve and your flexibility to continue to adapt and evolve as we learn more about this virus.

Lastly, please remember to take care of yourselves and encourage your team members to do the same. Our response to this pandemic may continue for many more months. Please encourage your team to reach out for help. Maine Department of Health and Human Services in partnership with Maine EMS and other organizations has implemented the Front Line Warm Line that is available daily from 08:00 to 20:00 by calling 207.221.8196. Also, do not hesitate to reach out to the regional EMS office for additional local resources, including access to CISM, local counselors, and mental health professionals.

We continue to thank you for your service to communities across the State of Maine.

Regards,

Nirav D. Shah

Director, Maine CDC

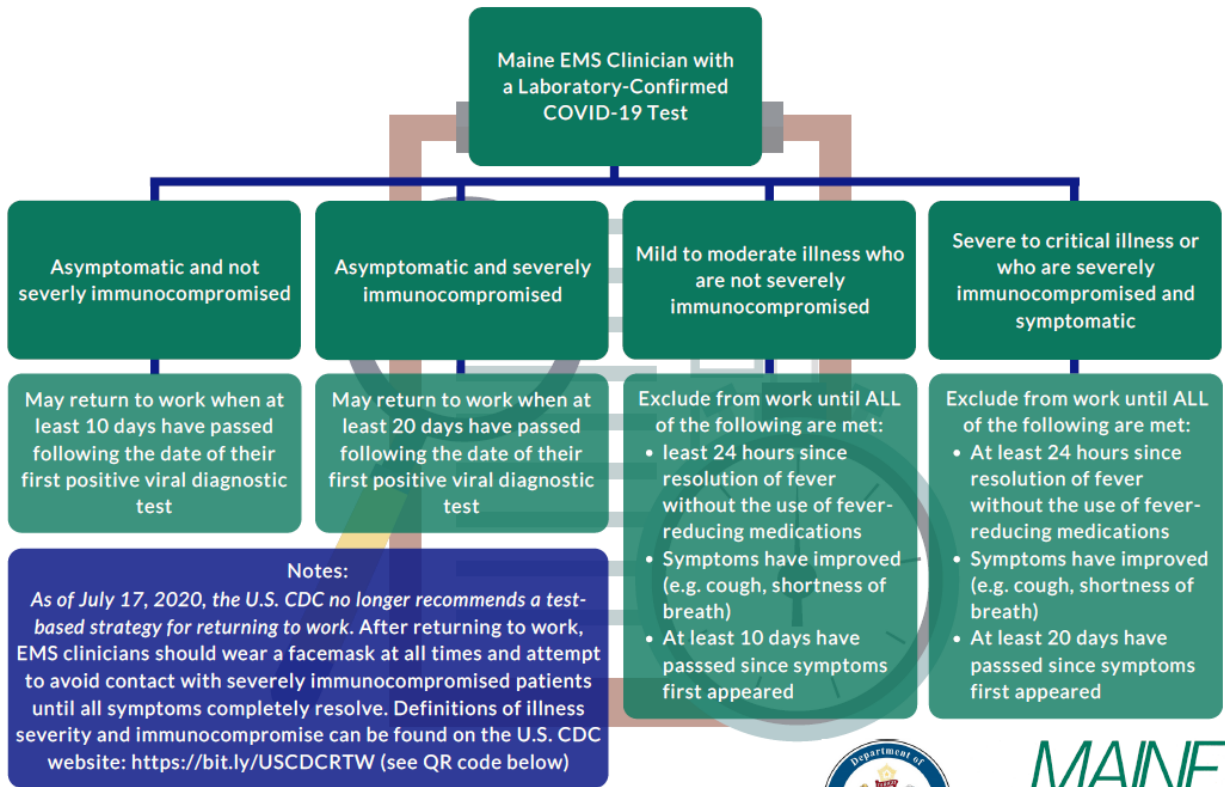
Sam Hurley

Director, Maine EMS

Joseph Thomas

State Fire Marshal

EMS Clinician Return to Work Guidance After Positive COVID-19 Test (Updated July 29, 2020)



Notes:
As of July 17, 2020, the U.S. CDC no longer recommends a test-based strategy for returning to work. After returning to work, EMS clinicians should wear a facemask at all times and attempt to avoid contact with severely immunocompromised patients until all symptoms completely resolve. Definitions of illness severity and immunocompromise can be found on the U.S. CDC website: <https://bit.ly/USCDCRTW> (see QR code below)

For More Information:
Note: Interim guidance and is subject to change. Information current as of July 29, 2020

