



**EMERGENCY MEDICAL  
SERVICES AGENCY**  
LOS ANGELES COUNTY

March 27, 2020

## MEMORANDUM

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Medical Director

**TO: Distribution List**

**FROM: Marianne Gausche-Hill, MD**

**SUBJECT: COVID-19 UPDATE #6: EMS Public Health Guidance for Return to Work and EMS Provider Agency-Based Specimen/Collection Testing Programs**

Today the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (Public Health) released Guidance for Monitoring EMS Personnel.

<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/docs/EMSMonitoringCOV.pdf>

This guidance identifies HIGH-RISK exposures for EMS providers. HIGH-RISK occurs when EMS responders have not donned appropriate PPE, and have performed a high-hazard, aerosol-generating procedure (i.e., intubation, King or direct laryngoscopy, bag mask ventilation, suctioning, CPR or nebulized treatments) on a confirmed or suspected COVID-19 patient. In these HIGH-RISK exposures EMS providers should self-isolate at home for 14 days and perform active monitoring. Treatment Protocol 1245, Potential COVID-19 Patients describes PPE requirements. If followed, this scenario should rarely occur. EMS personnel who have donned appropriate PPE and are without symptoms can monitor their symptoms as described in this guidance and as per their EMS Provider Agency Protocol.

A number of the EMS Provider Agencies have initiated testing of symptomatic EMS Providers.

EMS Provider Agency Medical Directors who initiate a testing program are responsible for investigating the laboratories that are supplying the testing kits to ensure that they are approved for COVID-19 and that the laboratory will report all data on testing to Public Health.

The state has granted approval for EMT's or Paramedics to obtain specimens for testing by a nasopharyngeal (NP) swab. We must approve programs in which **EMS personnel are obtaining a NP specimen** as per state guidelines. All of the necessary materials to initiate a request for program approval have already been developed, including a training PowerPoint. Contact Susan Mori [sumori@dhs.lacounty.gov](mailto:sumori@dhs.lacounty.gov) to obtain these materials.

A number of the COVID-19 EMS-based programs involve a drive-through at specified locations available for the public as well as for symptomatic EMS personnel. These programs provide a specimen collection kit to the "patient" and the patient then obtains the specimen themselves and gives the kit back to EMS personnel to send to a testing laboratory. The EMS Agency does not need to approve these programs, but there must be oversight by the EMS Provider Agency Medical Director.

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*"To advance the health of our communities by ensuring quality emergency and disaster medical services."*



**Health Services**  
<http://ems.dhs.lacounty.gov>

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**COVID-19 MEMO #6**

For all EMS-based specimen collection/testing programs, please email Susan Mori at the EMS Agency to notify us of your intent to test and to obtain approval as appropriate.

Data collection: In an effort to have an understanding of the countywide impact of these programs, we ask that all programs collect the following data and submit to Susan Mori on a monthly basis:

1. Total number of EMS providers tested who are employed by the testing Agency
2. Total number of EMS providers tested who are employed by another department
3. Total number of members of the public who are tested

In regards to Guidance for Monitoring EMS Personnel, strategies based on testing are not specifically outlined.

The EMS Agency **recommends** that providers who test positive who are symptomatic, not return to work, self-isolate at home, and do not return until at least 7 days from symptom onset and 72 hours from the last documented fever of 100 degrees F (without the use of anti-fever medications) and improvement in respiratory symptoms. Once returning to work they are required to wear a surgical mask on duty until they are a total of 14 days from symptom onset.

At this time, with *limited testing available*, it is not operationally feasible to obtain a repeat negative test for return to work. If in the future, repeat testing becomes more readily available, and tests can be resultated within 24 hours, per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines, then a testing strategy of two negative NP swabs at least 24 hours apart **and** resolution of fever **and** improvement in respiratory symptoms can be used to return an EMS provider to work.

Thanks for your continued efforts to care for the citizens of Los Angeles during this pandemic!

Distribution:

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