

# GENERAL ORDER



**To:** All Personnel  
**From:** Frank Cook, Chief of Department  
**Date:** March 16, 2020  
**Re:** General Order – Coronavirus Social Distancing and Protective Measures

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The global Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has forced everyone to rethink how they interact with their everyday environments – our work habits and how we gather. As a local government that must continue to provide critical and essential services, we've been carefully considering everything we can to protect our employees and help the situation.

So much is unknown right now, but the one thing we do know that might mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and protect ourselves and the community is to employ measures to minimize risks and limit our exposure to others. This is why the Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) must execute and adhere to the following directives until further notice:

- Effective immediately, the public is prohibited from entering fire station and fire administrative facilities. In the event of an emergency is reported at a fire station (i.e., medical emergency), the ambulance must be moved from the interior of the apparatus bay first, and the victim assessed and treated in the ambulance outside of the fire station.
- To coincide with the public being prohibited from entering the fire stations; families and friends of employees are also prohibited.
- All community risk reduction, public education and combined firefighter training activities are suspended. This includes:
  - Fire and life safety inspections;
  - Pre-planning and site or occupancy familiarization training;
  - Public education and customer service requests including cardiopulmonary resuscitation classes, station tours, smoke detector installation requests, blood pressure checks, and community events and meetings;
  - Operation of the Northgate Mall Store; and
  - Multi-company trainings.

- All training, meetings and interactions (e.g., committee, vendors, outside agency, etc.) which require face to face interaction must be cancelled. Communications by means of teleconferencing, web-based or phone is encourage.
- Only Department of Fire and EMS personnel will be permitted to ride in ambulances, apparatus and vehicles. Emergency medical technician student, paramedic student and citizen observer programs are suspended.
- Personnel must use caution and limit the number of personnel when responding to emergency medical incidents at assisted living, group homes, retirement, and or nursing care facilities.
- Fire company responses to emergency medical incidents must adhere to the General Order: Interim Guidance for COVID-19 Responses.
- Stations should limit interaction with each other to times when it is necessary due to an emergency situation. Crews will not interact with other stations for training, PT or other routine activities. These should be handled in-house as a company not a shift.
- Emergency medical, domestic supplies and other types of deliveries should be left at an entrance door for the person in charge to accept and distribute.
- Crews visiting another fire station for supply re-stocking or filling of self-contained breathing air cylinders must limit their time and interaction with the other crews, especially if they, their equipment, and vehicles have not been decontaminated following an incident response.
- Ambulances must be disinfected each morning (first thing) with a heavy cleaning and again after each transport or patient interaction in the patient compartment in accordance with department Standard Operating Guidelines addressing infection control.
- Bunkrooms, dayrooms, fitness and kitchen areas must be disinfected throughout the shift. Lysol or Clorox use is encouraged throughout the day and door handles should be wiped down frequently.
- Body isolation substance (BSI) must be followed as appropriate, error on the side of over-protecting oneself and patients
- 911 call-takers at the Hamilton County Communications Center (HCCC) are pre-screening during emergency medical dispatch, if an alert is given personnel must be in BSI personal protective equipment (PPE). As directed, re-evaluate each patient with pertinent questioning prior to patient treatment and gear up in BSI PPE as indicated.

- Hospitals are also pre-screening during emergency room arrival, patients running a temperate, having chest pains, and or shortness of breath are required to be on a N95 or a non-rebreather, if on oxygen.
- Throughout any victim transport the use of the ambulance heating ventilation and air conditioning systems must be in accordance with General Order: Interim Guidance for COVID-19 Responses and A110 Highly Infectious Disease Transport Protocol. The patient compartment exhaust blower must remain ON and operative at ALL times.
- When dispatched to a potential COVID-19 patient consider only sending no more than two personnel into a home or area to do a patient initial assessment, again the goal is to limit risk and exposure.
- It is strongly recommended NOT to transport family members accompanying patients in an ambulance, have them ride separate.
- IN THE EVENT that quarantining of personnel becomes necessary, the department will follow the direction of the Health Department first and foremost. Personnel will be permitted to self-quarantine at home, but if an employee is uncomfortable with that we will CLOSE Station 102 and quarantine personnel there. Remember we don't want to expose each other, but we especially don't want to expose our families at the end of a shift either.
- When shopping for daily groceries only one person per company will be permitted to shop in the store. Shopping should be conducted as early in the morning as possible while the store is at its possible lowest occupancy. Please bring all other needed items to work with you (toiletries, etc.) so we are not making additional trips. The key is to limit our exposure.
- Be vigilant in your efforts to perform best practices in disinfecting our facilities, vehicles, and equipment.

Additionally, the department may need to introduce creative scheduling measures to ensure shifts are adequately covered. If you have scheduled time off that you no longer need, please cancel it as soon as possible. If you need time off due to childcare, work through your Battalion Chief so we can accommodate you as best we can. My hope is that we can work together to strike a good balance between maintaining proper staffing levels and caring for the needs of our employees.

As conveyed in previous correspondences, the HCCC is prescreening 911 callers when answering calls for a sick person, breathing problems, or a suspected respiratory illness. This allows 911 call takers to more thoroughly screen calls in an attempt to provide responding EMS crews with information for high risk patients.

All employees will be receiving information by means of email and video conferencing from Captain Packer on items we need to address from an EMS operations perspective.

The public is not permitted in any of our facilities. Other than emergency responses, we will only interact with the public when absolutely necessary. For administrative purposes, best efforts will be made to conduct business by phone or virtually. If a meeting of this type is not possible, the meeting should be postponed until a later time.

All fire companies and EMS units are to remain in their first due area limiting contact with others as much as possible. If you need something, work through the on-duty shift commander to obtain it. For the foreseeable future, we are responding to emergency request for service, conducting company level and individual training, and working on individual areas of responsibilities. All other activities are suspended at this time. We are taking these measures for two reasons:

- SAFETY AND WELL-BEING OF OUR EMPLOYEES; AND
- SAFETY AND WELL-BEING OF OUR CITIZENS, BUSINESSES AND VISITORS.

The Township's Leadership Team has discussed what to do should any of our employees become infected. If you are sick, STAY HOME. This includes part-time employees. If a family member or someone you live with is sick, consider self-quarantining for a few days to ensure you do not have any symptoms. The three types of symptoms are fever, cough, and shortness of breath with fever being the most important symptom of not coming to work. We will adjust, adapt, and overcome as we are presented with challenges in the coming weeks. Our thought process is to limit exposure as much as possible.

I want to assure you that the Trustees, Administrator, and Command Staff are committed to the health and well-being of our employees. As simple as it may sound, frequent handwashing and limiting contact is the best course of action as we work through this pandemic. If it absolutely necessary to engage in face to face communications maintain an adequate distance from the other person. Updated information will be disseminated as it becomes available. This will prove to be a challenging time, but I'm sure with a cooperative working attitude, we will get through this just fine.

To summarize, the strategy of social distancing was developed during the 1918 Spanish Flu and that is the recommended strategy of the Center for Disease Control. Here is a good informational article explaining social distancing:

<https://qz.com/1816060/a-chart-of-the-1918-spanish-flu-shows-why-social-distancing-works/>

If you would like additional information, here are a few good resources:

Hamilton County Health District – <https://www.hamiltoncountyhealth.org/>

Ohio Department of Health - <https://odh.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/odh/home>

Center for Disease Control - <https://www.cdc.gov/>

Please forward any questions that arise through your company officer to the command staff.