

Frequently Asked Questions*

SIM-NE RURAL EMS & COVID-19: Info and Discussion

Facebook Live event on March 25th, 2020

*Questions answered by during the original event are provided. Please note the dates that other questions were answered. Check the links as available for the most up-to-date info.

QUESTION	date	ANSWER
What questions should our dispatch center ask to screen for potential COVID patients?		Please take a look at the material on the CDC website pertaining to this question: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-for-ems.html
Does the UV light truly disinfect the ambulance? If so, will it work on PPE?		This depends on the strength of the UV light, the user instructions being followed, also if the light has 360 degree abilities. There are a lot of different factors in determining the true effectiveness of UV lights, as industrial grade should work to tear apart the strands of DNA virus. This being said, more research needs to be completed to make sure that this is a cost effective option for squads and departments.
If we come into contact with a confirmed case what are we supposed to do? Quarantine for 14 days?	3/26/2020 9:51 AM	Please take a look at the material from the CDC website pertaining this question: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-risk-assesment-hcp.html
How many responders are appropriate to go on calls with suspected COVID patients?	3/26/2020 9:20 AM	Crews are encouraged to limit the amount of responders to calls that a squad is able to do so with. The smaller the crew, the smaller the amount of crew that may be contaminated as well.
What should our procedure be for our crew after they have dealt with a suspected COVID patient?	3/26/2020 9:03 AM	Please take a look at the steps listed by EMS1 website in connection with the EPA: https://www.ems1.com/public-health/articles/cdc-updates-ems-911-guidance-for-covid-19-LPnbCkM79cvPM7sF/
Are there questions we can ask to help us determine if the patient has been exposed?	3/26/2020 9:02 AM	Please take a look at the "Patient Assessment" section on the CDC website pertaining to this question: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-for-ems.html
What local hospitals want the Rural department to do on arrival of infected patients	3/26/2020 8:00 AM	Please take a look at the "EMS Transport of the PUI Patient..." section on the CDC website pertaining to this question: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-for-ems.html
How long can this virus live on various types of surfaces?	3/26/2020 7:36 AM	Please take a look at the material from the CNBC website pertaining to this question: https://www.cnbc.com/2020/03/18/coronavirus-lives-for-hours-in-air-particles-and-days-on-surfaces-new-us-study-shows.html
What is the best procedure for cleaning the ambulance and what cleaning solutions should be used?	3/26/2020 7:20 AM	Please take a look at the "Cleaning EMS Transport Vehicles..." section on the CDC website pertaining to this question: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-for-ems.html
What are the procedures to clean and disinfect PPE if it needs to be reused?	3/26/2020 6:59 AM	Please take a look at the material on the Nebraska Medical Center website pertaining to this question: https://www.nebraskamed.com/sites/default/files/documents/covid-19/COVID-Extended-Use-Reuse-of-PPE-and-N95.pdf?date03212020
What do we tell the public as providers regarding covid-19?	3/25/2020 11:20 PM	It is best to refer the public to the CDC website for the most current and up-to-date information about COVID-19.
Who does fit testing for N-95 masks? If that is something we can do in house, can you provide a video on how to do it?	3/25/2020 10:38 PM	Fit testing must be completed by a licensed facility that provides OSHA-Accepted Fit Test Protocols. Occupational Health clinics usually complete the proper fit tests. This needs to be completed every 12 months. Please see the material on the OSHA website for further information: https://www.osha.gov/video/respiratory_protection/fittesting_transcript.html and: https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1910/1910.134AppA
Are there any grants/funding available for disinfecting equipment available?	3/25/2020 10:09 PM	Please watch the FEMA website pertaining to this question: https://www.fema.gov/grants This is something that you will have to keep an eye on, as this is currently changing as more funding becomes available.
Is this virus spread by droplet or airborne?	3/25/2020 10:06 PM	Please take a look at the material on the Nebraska Medical Center website pertaining to this question: https://www.nebraskamed.com/patients/covid19/how-it-spreads
How many agencies, if any, have already started transporting people with Covid-19 in Nebraska.	3/25/2020 10:03 PM	It is hard to say, as not every patient that has COVID-19 or suspected COVID-19 have been tested. Please see the most current Nebraska confirmed case count and location on the DHHS website: http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/default.aspx
If someone has been infected with the virus and recover, can they get it again?	3/25/2020 9:59 PM	Please take a look at the material from the CDC website pertaining to this question: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/faq.html
If we don't open the cabinets on the transport, are the items in those closed cabinets good or do they need to be disinfected still?	3/25/2020 9:23 PM	Please take a look at the "Cleaning EMS Transport Vehicles..." section on the CDC website pertaining to this question: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-for-ems.html
Is it possible for the responders to get confirmation/denial of COVID-19 test results for knowing exposure?	3/25/2020 9:07 PM	Please take a look at the material from The Health and Human Services website pertaining this question: https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/covid-19-hipaa-and-first-responders-508.pdf
Should we be checking our responders temps daily?		If a responder has signs and symptoms of sickness, they should not be responding. Please see the material on the CDC website pertaining this question: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/infection-control/control-recommendations.html#CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fhcp%2Finfection-control.html
What can we do that will better prepare us for a future pandemic, should a similar situation arise?		We feel that as this new coronavirus has grown, we are constantly finding ways to learn more, improve patient care, plan, and prepare better. When this pandemic is over with, we will all need to reevaluate that we can do to prevent the issues that were preventable from possibly occurring in the future.
Can you wear goggles instead of a face shield? we only have goggles right now and N95's	3/25/2020 8:28 PM	The CDC is currently recommending either goggles or face shields along with N95 masks. Please take a look at the material from the CDC website pertaining to this question: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/ppe-strategy/eye-protection.html
When would it be prudent to tier with ALS?	3/25/2020	You should continue to follow your protocols when it concerns calling ALS services.

How long does it take to get the test back on a patient? Who will notify us if our patient was positive?	3/25/2020	Please take a look at the material from the CDC website pertaining this question: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/testing.html
How do we properly vent the ambulance if transporting a COVID-19 patient?		Please take a look at the material in the "EMS Transport of the PUI Patient" from the CDC website pertaining to this question: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-for-ems.html
So my work is having us spray Lysol on ourselves to kill the germs but I feel this is not safe. Is this?	3/25/2020 8:09 PM	Please read the label of the spray that is being utilized. Please take a look at the material from the Lysol website pertaining to this question: https://www.lysol.com/healthy-home/understanding-coronavirus/
How can we as EMS providers help our long-term care facility and assisted living facility staff care for residents with Covid-19 without having to make transports when possible?	3/25/2020 8:06 PM	This would be a great question to discuss with your medical director. Please make sure that you are following your SOPs and protocols.
How effective are the homemade masks?		This was covered during our panel discussion. Please look at the material on the
Should we transport all suspected COVID-19 patients with exhaust vents going?		Please take a look at the material in the "EMS Transport of the PUI Patient" from the CDC website pertaining to this question: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-for-ems.html
How effective is homemade hand sanitizer?		This depends on the percentage of alcohol and what type is being utilized. Please take a look at the material from the CDC website pertaining to this question: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/infection-control/hcp-hand-sanitizer.html
Is it really advisable to ever wear structural fire gear on a medical call?		Bunker gear can be worn, as long as the department has a way to clean them properly with a gear washer extractor and appropriate drying practices. There also needs to be a policy in place as to doffing the gear and transporting to station to wash. Please take a look at the material on the CDC website pertaining to this question: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/respirator-use-faq.html
Is an SCBA effective in place of an N95? If so, how do we decontaminate those		The departments across the nation that are starting to utilize their SCBAs for patient care, have run out of N95 masks and have no additional source of masked PPE. While this is a possibility should the resources for your department deplete, those who wear them still need to make sure they are properly fit tested and familiar with the device. Also, decontamination should be completed using an approved agent according to the manufacturer's specifications.
What is the difference between a mask and a respirator?		Please take a look at the material from the CDC website pertaining to this question: https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/npptl/topics/respirators/disp_part/differencerespsurgical.html
Facial hair and N95 masks, what are the do's and don'ts?		Please take a look at the material from the CDC website pertaining to this question: https://blogs.cdc.gov/niosh-science-blog/2020/03/16/n95-preparedness/
Can a patient refuse transport if we suspect COVID-19?		This is covered in the panel training. You would still follow your protocols for patient refusal. There is work currently being completed for Nebraska EMS Protocols pertaining COVID-19 and transferring.
Can you still donate blood during this time?		It is okay to donate blood at this time.
If a patient refuses transport and we suspect Covid-19, is it a HIPPA violation if we report it to the health department?		In order for The Department of Health and Human Services to have a confirmed case, there must first be a true test completed with a positive result. Please see the material from the CDC website pertaining to this question: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/testing.html
Does the greater good for the public come into consideration with the emergency or pandemic declarations?		As EMS providers, we want to take care of those who need us. During this time, we are all looking out for the good of all of those around us. Please make sure that you are following your protocols and SOGs.
If someone has had pneumonia more than once are they more susceptible to this?		Please take a look at the material from the CDC website pertaining to this question: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/people-at-higher-risk.html
Would creating an isolation type tent over the patient during long transports be a viable and effective practice?		Yes. Commercially made ambulance isolation pods are available. They may be cost prohibitive for services that rarely would use them. A Google search for "ambulance isolation pod" produced several different models, with associated web sites, in the images tab. Homemade, untested isolation set ups may or may not be effective. Proper PPE for a long transport would be the same as a short transport. Providers in fixed facilities are often in PPE for several hours wearing the same PPE.