



CITY OF HOUSTON

Health and Fire Departments

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May 5, 2020 (Replaces prior version)

To: All Members from HFD Medical Direction,

We would like to update you on current understanding and recommendations regarding COVID-19. Please take the time to thoroughly read through this communication, as there have been significant updates to the COVID-19 case definition since the last version (dated March 17, 2020).

How has the case definition of COVID-19 changed?

As the disease has progressed, the CDC has seen fit to expand the case definition for COVID-19. Therefore, HFD should be concerned about possible COVID-19 in patients with any of the following symptoms:

- Cough
- Shortness of breath/difficulty breathing
- **OR** at least **TWO** of the following:
 - Fever (>100.0 F or 37.8 C)
 - Chills
 - Repeated shaking with chills
 - Muscle pain
 - Headache
 - Sore Throat
 - New loss of taste or smell

If you suspect possible COVID-19 based on the criteria above, it is important to give the hospital prenotification prior to arrival. Members shall transport these patients Priority Two and give a full report to the Base Station so the receiving hospital can be adequately notified by phone.

If the patient is stable, the E/O should proceed into the hospital without the patient in order to alert the hospital that they have arrived and follow the hospitals directions for bringing the patient into the hospital.

Where do we stand now?

As you know, we have thousands of cases of COVID-19 across the greater Houston area, and we believe community to spread to be widespread.

Due to the very nature of being first responders, HFD members are likely to be the first health care providers to interact with possible COVID-19 patients. Many will exhibit COVID-19 symptoms, as defined above, but others may also be asymptomatic. Asymptomatic spread is a real concern, so strict adherence to the PPE requirements listed in General Order 20-106 (dated March 26, 2020) is paramount in ALL patient contacts. In summary:

- All members shall wear “Minimum PPE”, which consists of gloves and eye protection, for all EMS calls

- All members who enter the 6 foot “bubble” around the patient shall wear “Primary” PPE, which consists of gloves, eye protection, and an N-95 respirator
- All members who enter the 6-foot “bubble” around the patient shall wear “Maximum” PPE, which consists of gloves, eye protection, N-95 respirator, and gown, if any of the following are occurring:
 - Close physical contact with the patient (lifting, carrying, rolling, etc.)
 - Aerosol-generating procedures: nebs, CPAP, intubation, CPR

Additionally, the possibility of asymptomatic spread of SARS-CoV2 means that it is also important to adhere to General Orders 20-118 (4/3/20) and 20-119 (4/7/20) regarding temperature screening, facemasks, hand hygiene, and social distancing at all times while on duty.

The HFD Medical Director’s Office will continue to advise and work with HFD Command Staff in order to provide the most up to date information available to assess patients properly and to keep members as safe as possible. Please continue to monitor official correspondence for updated information and guidance. Thank you for your diligence and hard work.