



March 28, 2020

## **INTERIM GUIDANCE FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES TO LIMIT POTENTIAL EXPOSURE TO COVID-19**

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### **BACKGROUND**

The New York State Department of Health (Department) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) continue to closely monitor the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. In response to the outbreak, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo's Executive Order 202 declared a State of Emergency on March 7, 2020.

### **PURPOSE**

This guidance was developed for New York State law enforcement agencies to mitigate potential exposure of law enforcement personnel to COVID-19.

Infectious disease experts continue to learn about COVID-19, including how it spreads and affects different at-risk populations. The current spread of COVID-19 is thought to occur primarily person-to-person via respiratory droplets transmitted through close contact.

### **GENERAL INFECTION PREVENTION STRATEGIES**

Strategies to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 include:

- Staying home if you are sick. Unless it is an emergency, call your health care provider for medical advice that can be provided over the phone or use telehealth services before traveling to the office. If it is an emergency, call 911 and notify them of potential symptoms (e.g., fever, cough, trouble breathing).
- Covering your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing and then immediately discard it in a closed container. If a tissue is not available, use the inside of your elbow.
- Keeping your hands clean by washing them often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are unavailable, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- If possible, avoiding close contact with others, especially those who are sick. At least six feet of distance is recommended.
  - The safety of the law enforcement personnel will take precedence over social distancing. Therefore, to the extent the law enforcement agencies have law enforcement personnel in close proximity based on individual safety (e.g. two officers in a patrol car), those policies should remain.

### **SPECIFIC MITIGATION STRATEGIES FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL**

According to the [Center for Disease Control](#), “[f]or law enforcement personnel performing daily routine activities, the immediate health risk is considered low.” However, law enforcement should exercise caution in their interactions with colleagues and the public.

When interacting with the public, if possible, avoid close contact with others, especially those who are sick. At least six feet of distance is recommended.

If law enforcement personnel encounter an individual demonstrating mild to severe respiratory symptoms, including cough, fever, or trouble breathing, law enforcement personnel should take additional precautions to minimize the risk of COVID-19 transmission. **However, these precautions should never supersede law enforcement action when immediate life-saving interventions or imminent public safety measures are required.**

To the extent possible, law enforcement personnel should consider the following precautions when interacting with the public:

- Having a trained Emergency Medical Service/Emergency Medical Technician (EMS/EMT) assess and transport a person in custody or in need of assistance who is displaying symptoms of COVID-19 to a hospital or other healthcare facility.
- Ensuring only trained personnel wearing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) have direct, close contact with individual.
- Wearing personal protective equipment (PPE), to the extent it is available and readily accessible, when close, prolonged contact with the public is expected. PPE may include disposable exam gloves, an approved face mask, and/or eye protection, such as goggles.
- Limit risk of exposure by using a surgical mask, unless it is damaged or soiled, when responding to a medical call.
- Cleaning and disinfecting duty belt and gear prior to use and reuse using a household cleaning spray or wipe, according to the product label.
- Follow standard operating procedures for the containment and disposal of used PPE, to the extent your law enforcement agency has such procedures.
- Follow standard operating procedures for containing and laundering clothes, to the extent your law enforcement agency has such procedures. Avoid shaking soiled clothes.

## **DAILY MONITORING AND RISK REDUCTION**

All law enforcement agencies should implement risk reduction procedures consistent with this guidance, including but not limited to self-monitoring for symptoms (e.g. fever, cough, and shortness of breath).

## **EXPOSED LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL**

Law enforcement agencies may permit law enforcement personnel exposed to, or recovering from, COVID-19 to work under the following conditions:

1. Operations: Exposed asymptomatic law enforcement personnel can continue to work, provided their absence would adversely impact the ability for the agency to continue to provide an appropriate level of response. Self-monitoring should be continued as recommended below.

- a. Asymptomatic: Law enforcement personnel who have had contacts with confirmed or suspected cases, but they display no symptoms.
    - Personnel who are asymptomatic contacts of confirmed or suspected COVID-19 cases should self-monitor twice-a-day (i.e. temperature and symptoms check). Asymptomatic personnel should also undergo temperature monitoring and symptom checks by agency personnel at the beginning of each shift and, at least, every 12 hours during the shift.
    - Personnel who are asymptomatic contacts of confirmed or suspected COVID-19 cases should wear a facemask, to the extent it is available and readily accessible, while working until 14 days after the last high-risk exposure.
  - b. Symptomatic: Law enforcement personnel with confirmed, or suspected based upon symptoms, COVID-19 who have maintained isolation for at least 7 days after illness onset and have been at least 72 hours fever-free with other symptoms improving (without fever-reducing medicines).
    - Personnel who are recovering from COVID-19, but otherwise fit for duty, should wear a facemask until 14 days after onset of illness if mild symptoms persist, but are improving.
2. Reduced Risk Assignment. If possible, personnel working under these conditions should be preferentially assigned, whenever possible, to job functions that have less contact with others and the public. Staffing models may consider assigning partners who are both in an exposed category to reduce risk. Crews may be assigned to work a slower response area with fewer public contacts. As this outbreak grows, all personnel may need to be assigned to any assignment.
  3. Law Enforcement Personnel Becomes Symptomatic: If personnel who are asymptomatic develop symptoms consistent with COVID-19, they should immediately notify their supervisor remotely (e.g. phone, radio, etc.), stop work, and isolate at home. Testing should be prioritized for these personnel. All personnel with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 should be dealt with as if they have this infection regardless of the availability of test results. As referenced above, agencies may consider recalling these personnel to duty after 72 hours fever-free (without fever-reducing medicines) and improving other symptoms.

Law enforcement agencies may promulgate specific directives to their personnel and officers that is consistent with this interim guidance. However, given the rapidly changing nature of this public health emergency and the critical mission of law enforcement, agencies may adapt or adjust their specific protocols and procedures to ensure appropriate staffing and effective operations.

**Call the Novel Coronavirus Hotline 24/7 at 1-888-364-3065 for additional guidance or visit the DOH's website at <https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/home> or visit CDC's website at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>.**