



# ILLINOIS FIRE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION

*Dedicated to excellence in the Fire Service*

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Chiefs,

As we all experience the unprecedented reality that COVID-19 has brought to our Country and State, we wanted to let you know what the Illinois Fire Chiefs are doing and provide the best information possible. Your Presidents and the IFCA staff have been in constant communication over the past weeks and we will continue this process as we work through the challenging days ahead. We feel that one of the most important things we are able to do is to provide information to our members throughout Illinois – realizing that each situation is at least slightly different from the other.

We want to share with you what some of our members have shared with us. We realize that not all of these situations may apply to you, but you should realize that each is taken to protect our responders and their families while enabling the response to our communities.



Assure that your responders wear the proper PPE as outlined in [CDC](#) guidelines for healthcare workers

- ☼ This CANNOT be stressed enough – the risk of exposure when PPE is used properly is very low
  - If you wear an SCBA in a fire you are not exposed to smoke – this is similar
- ☼ Make sure that you have the PPE that your responders need, understand how to replace PPE when used, determine alternatives if necessary
  - IDPH plans to flow supplies through local health departments, do you know who that is
  - Some agencies are having a responder re-use PPE that was used on a patient with low suspicion of infection throughout a shift
  - The CDC has a guideline on [Optimizing the needed PPE](#), particularly respirators



Reduce the potential exposure to your responders and staff – both in day to day functions and response

- ☼ If you can send one responder into any scene instead of two, can you still accomplish the task
- ☼ Does the office staff need to be there – can you stagger staffing, can work be done from home
- ☼ Can you restrict those in fire stations to the minimum needed for emergency operations



Do you have a plan for all aspects of this event, particularly if this extends into a long term event

- ☼ When your staffing becomes taxed, do you know what your neighbors can help with
- ☼ Do you have a plan in place to adjust staffing levels based on demand stresses
- ☼ Do you have a plan in place to clean your stations and response vehicles
- ☼ Do you understand when and why to quarantine and have a plan to do so
- ☼ Have you INFORMED your members of all your plans



Are you keeping track of expenses for COVID-19 response that exceed normal expenses

- ☼ As with any disaster, it is likely that funds will be available for response and recovery
- ☼ Do you know the policy of your County EMA for reporting COVID-19 response



Are you providing good information to your employees and your community

- ☼ Information is changing every day, every hour and sometimes every minute
- ☼ Make sure your information is validated and up to date
- ☼ Don't make the situation worse with rumor and innuendo
- ☼ Are you using social media, can you keep the information accurate

The COVID-19 virus continues to spread with predictions of anywhere from 30-80% of the population being infected. It is forecast that we will see a spike in cases over the next ten days or so. We have already seen a spike in cases and deaths are beginning to rise. If your organization has not assisted someone with the COVID-19 already, it is very likely it will soon.

The other thing to keep in mind is that many experts feel this will not be a short duration event. Some indicate the impact of the virus will last for eighteen months. It is clear that the infection has not been contained and that the current strategy is to reduce the number of those infected right now, to avoid stressing the medical services – including EMS services. The unfortunate possible consequence of this effort is the event dragging out for a longer period of time with a bounce back of more cases in a few weeks or months.

**Please remember that these are only recommendations. Please take the time to plan and communicate within your own organization. Remember to provide PPE and make sure your responders use it properly.**

We encourage you to continue to check the [IFCA COVID-19](#) webpage. We try to provide updated information as it is available. We want to be a resource for our members to help protect all of our firefighters and communities.

On behalf of the Illinois Fire Chiefs Association, we thank you.

IFCA Presidents

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