



February 28, 2020

## Provincial Information Bulletin – COVID-19

Dear Members;

On January 22, 2020 the Provincial Safety Director for the Union released a province wide bulletin regarding Coronavirus (please click <https://bit.ly/2PyxLcm> to view bulletin), what is now currently known as COVID-19. It is the Union's goal to see that members are aware of potential concerns, obligations, rights, and information and have the ability to acquire supports as needed.

### What is COVID-19?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses found mostly in animals. In humans, they can cause diseases ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome. Symptoms of COVID-19, the disease caused by the new coronavirus, are similar to other respiratory illnesses, including the flu and common cold. While many of the characteristics of COVID-19 are still unknown, mild to severe illness has been reported for confirmed cases. As of February 24, 2020, B.C. has seven confirmed cases of COVID-19. The highest number of infections continue to be reported from Hubei Province, China.

### How its spread?

Coronavirus is transmitted via larger liquid droplets when a person coughs or sneezes. The virus can enter through these droplets through the eyes, nose or throat if you are in close contact. The virus is not known to be airborne (e.g. transmitted through the particles floating in the air) and it is not something that comes in through the skin.

### What is the difference from droplets Contact to Airborne transmission?

These droplets typically spread only one to two metres and are too large to float in the air (i.e. airborne) and quickly fall to the ground. Influenza and SARS are two examples of diseases capable of being transmitted from droplet contact. Airborne transmission occurs when much smaller evaporated droplets or dust particles containing the microorganism float in the air for long periods of time.

### How do I protect my family from exposure?

Follow the same advice that public health officials recommend for the cold and flu season: wash your hands often with soap and water, cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, avoid others who are unwell, and stay home when you are sick. Wear masks when you are sick to limit exposure to other people

### What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of COVID-19, the disease caused by the new coronavirus, include fever, cough and difficulty breathing.

### **Can you get sick from people that are asymptomatic?**

There have been a few instances of transmissions before the person became sick or the symptoms were mild that the person did not know they were sick. Those are exceptions as most people became ill from being in close contact with someone who showed symptoms such as coughing and sneezing, therefore transmitting the virus through droplets. This is why B.C. health officials are focused on putting protection around people who are ill and showing symptoms, in order to decrease the spread to others.

### **Can you get sick from touching surfaces?**

COVID-19 is transmitted through respiratory droplets that come from a person's throat or lungs when they're coughing or sneezing. While droplets can fall on surfaces, viruses in the coronavirus family don't survive very long on surfaces. Washing your hands frequently with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds as a precaution to further lower your risk of getting sick from COVID-19 and other viruses. Whenever you have touched surfaces, or other people, wash your hands before you touch your face.

### **What are BCEHS Prevention & Control Guidelines?**

- a. If a patient has suspected respiratory illness, \*notify a paramedic specialist prior to patient contact\*
- b. Isolate a patient with potential infection as soon as possible
- c. All patients with acute respiratory illness/pneumonia should be managed as per BCEHS droplets and airborne respiratory protection policy (pg. 33-38)
- d. Donning a full sleeve fluid repellent gown, N95 mask, face shield (preferred) or safety glasses, and gloves are required. Please review "IPAC donning procedures" on pg. 77
- e. For stable patients, limit direct contact; ideally, one paramedic and one first responder only. All other responders should stay outside of the immediate area
- f. For unstable patients, perform your duty as per normal procedure
- g. Place a surgical mask on the patient (\*do not use an N95 on any patient)
- h. Avoid use of nebulized solutions, if possible • N95 mask → • Gloves • \*Face shield or safety glasses  
Long-sleeved fluid repellent gown • Frequent handwashing N95 masks with eye protection should be donned during any aerosol-generating procedures listed below:
  - All airway management procedures • Intubation and related procedures • CPR • Nebulized medication therapy • High concentration oxygen administration therapy • CPAP • Airway suctioning BCEHS IPAC 100.1 IPAC Guidelines:2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) 27 Jan 2020
- i. Pre-notify receiving hospital to prepare an appropriate room
- j. Remain in ambulance bay until triage gives direction
- k. Avoid the movement and transport of patients through the emergency department
- l. Paramedics should put on PPE in a safe, clean zone prior to entering the scene where paramedics could be exposed to patient contact



- m. All responding agencies must continue to practice fastidious hand hygiene. Avoid touching the face, nose, and mouth after contact with a patient. Wash hands thoroughly and disinfect personal effects (belonging to paramedic) that may have been contaminated during the call.
- n. Patient belongings should be bagged and dealt with as per decontamination procedures, if available
- o. Extreme care should be used when doffing/removing PPE to avoid cross-contamination.

Review <https://intranet.bcas.ca/publications/exposure-control-plan-part2-ipac.pdf>

**IPAC doffing procedures on pg 82. Also, utilize a buddy system if feasible.**

1. Remove gloves
  2. Perform stringent hand hygiene
  3. Remove fluid repellent gown
  4. Repeat hand hygiene practices
  5. Remove N95/P100 respirator
  6. Repeat hand hygiene practices
- p. Wearing your PPE, thoroughly clean equipment and inside the ambulance with BCEHS supplied disinfectant wipes, according to the Exposure Control Plan. There is no reason to put the ambulance out of service for deep cleaning.
  - q. Promptly notify BCEHS Infection Control Leader, Janie Nichols at (604) 838-3357, or the PHSA Infection Control Office on-call at (604) 875-2161. Ensure they are informing a medical health officer if a patient meets the following case definition:
    - I. Fever and acute respiratory illness, with or without pneumonia AND
    - II. Recent travel to Hubei Province (includes Wuhan City), China within 14 days prior to symptom onset OR
    - III. Another potentially relevant exposure (e.g. close contact with someone who was ill and had recently travelled to Hubei Province (includes Wuhan City), China.

### How do I clean the ambulance after a call?

Cleaning and Disinfection: The ambulance should be cleaned using the Accel PREvention wipes in the ambulance. Two wipes are required if there is visible soil; one to remove visible soil and second wipe to disinfect. 3-minute wet contact time is essential to ensure the disinfection of the area.

If performing an AGMP, create a negative pressure environment in the patient compartment of the ambulance and set the rear exhaust fans in the patient compartment to HIGH to maximize air extraction (engineering control). Routine post transport cleaning and disinfection of all used equipment and touched surfaces in vehicle can begin once the patient compartment has vented for 20 minutes. If you re-enter the ambulance during the ventilation procedure, you are required to wear an N95 mask.

### What do I do if I'm exposed?

- 1.) Call the paramedic specialist in dispatch for instructions: Cell / landline  
1-833-829-4099  
(604) 829-4099



Sat Phone: **001-604-829-4099**

2.) Call the Provincial Workplace Call Centre: **1-866-922-9464**

3.) Call and report to WSBC: **1-888-967-5377**

<https://www.worksafebc.com/en/resources/claims/forms/application-for-compensation-and-report-of-injury-or-occupational-disease-form-6?lang=en>

4.) How to file a claim: [https://www.cupe.bc.ca/occupational health and safety committee](https://www.cupe.bc.ca/occupational_health_and_safety_committee)

5.) The employer at this point is asking that you go home and self-isolate (72 hours is how long it takes to do a COVID- 19 test panel). If it comes back positive, there will be a quarantined for 14 days.

### **What supports do I have?**

You are not alone, and there are supports in place to help with your fears and concerns.

1. CIS- You have access to a supportive CIS peer team to help provide education, resources, CISM interventions. [CISCOORDINATORS@bcehs.ca](mailto:CISCOORDINATORS@bcehs.ca) **1-855-969-4321**
2. EFAP / Homewood Health – **1-800-663-1142**

Your APBC provincial safety team will continue to support members should they need it. We are working on more details on how to assist all our members should they have concerns. This includes actively working with BCEHS to get further clarification regarding issues that could arise.

If you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact your Provincial Safety Director, your RVP, or your Union office

Sincerely,

  
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CF/sd/MoveUp

