

To: All Regional EMS Agencies

From: Commonwealth Health

Re: Updated Operational Processes at Commonwealth Health facilities related to CoVID-19

Date: **4/5/2020**

Commonwealth Health values all regional EMS providers who bring patients to our hospitals for care, and views our EMS partners as a vital component of our health system. In challenging times such as these, communication is key and we would like to take an opportunity to share some guidance and operational changes that we are implementing in various Commonwealth Health facilities in response to the growing CoVID-19 concern. This response is a dynamic situation with guidance coming out from the CDC on almost an hourly basis and it is our commitment to the EMS providers in the region that we will try our best to keep you updated to the constantly evolving situation. EMS Guidance released by Commonwealth Health on 3/17/2020 can be found below this and any current revisions have been noted. In an effort to provide EMS providers with comprehensive and standardized practices across the region we have collaborated with the EMS Liaisons at other regional health networks to make our policies as similar across the board as possible.

4/5/2020

1. **EMS providers will now be asked to be masked (procedure/surgical/ simple MASK) prior to entering any Commonwealth Health facility. This includes non-emergent, inter-facility, discharge, & wheelchair type calls.** In order to protect our providers and conserve PPE, the most judicious way to do this would be to wear an agency provided simple mask continuously during their shift. If the EMS Providers are NOT masked upon arrival at our facility they will be asked to wear one prior to entry.
2. Please follow all DOH-EMS policies and protocols related to proper utilization and use of PPE and maintain awareness of the evolving guidance related to conservation and re-use of certain PPE items. Consult your agency specific operating procedures. Resources for this information includes but is not limited to:
 - a. PA Dept. of Health EMS Bulletin 2020-02 "Infection Control Measures"
 - i. <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/Documents/EMS/EMSIB%202020-02%20Infection%20Control.pdf>
 - b. CDC - "Interim Infection Prevention & Control Recommendations for CoVID-19..."
 - i. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/infection-control/control-recommendations.html>
 - c. PA Dept. of Health EMS - BLS Protocol 931 "Suspected Influenza Like Illness"
 - i. <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/Documents/EMS/2019%20PA%20BLS%20Protocols%20Final.pdf>

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1. Screening and Notification:

- a. If EMS identifies a patient that meets screening criteria for CoVID-19 as prescribed by your agencies procedures we ask that you take the following steps
 - i. Adhere to DOH-EMS recommendations and your agency-specific guidelines to determine if the patient meets the criteria to be “quarantined in place” or “transported to a facility for treatment”. Consult Medical Command as needed.
*Refer to PA-DOH Bureau of EMS Bulletin 2020-06.
 1. <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/Documents/EMS/EMSIB%202020-06%20Covid-19%20Policy%20and%20Protocol%20Updates.pdf>
 - ii. Notify the receiving facility, as early as possible, of an incoming patient so that an appropriate room can be prepared. Ensure that the patient has been provided an appropriately sized mask per your agency’s guidelines. Please include a temperature reading in reporting of vital signs if possible.
 - iii. When arriving at the facility, notify the ED via the “EMS Line” of your arrival.
 - iv. **When arriving on an inter-facility transfer, OR a direct admit of a suspected or confirmed CoVID-19 patient please dial the EMS line and ask for guidance on how to access the facility, and request an escort. *3.31.2020**
 - v. If the patient is stable, remain in your ambulance until an ED staff member comes out to guide you through the facility-specific process.

2. Visitor Restrictions:

- a. We are in the ongoing process of limiting and controlling visitor and guest access to each of our facilities. Please advise family members on scene that NO visitors under the age of 18 will be allowed into any patient-care area, **including waiting rooms** and general visitation will be limited to one support person in an effort to protect our patients, staff and the general public. The ED “Ambulance Entrance” at each facility will remain operational; but, please note that other entrances to our facilities may be locked down as needed. In compliance with our preparedness procedures, we have been implementing the screening processes of all visitors and guests to our facilities. Please be patient with these measures.

3. Distribution of PPE:

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- a. Most PPE has been secured in nurses stations to preserve the supply of these important assets for our staff. Please note that PPE supplies are NOT to be taken or “restocked” from our hospitals. If your agency is experiencing a critical shortage of needed PPE and you are unable to purchase through normal distributors, please notify your local EMA coordinator to submit an asset request. ANYONE discovered removing PPE from our facilities will be referred to security and local authorities, as deemed appropriate.
- 4. First Hospital Access:
 - a. The “Ramp Entrance” to First Hospital will be locked down until further notice. For EMS Access to First Hospital please utilize the “Basement Entrance” on the same side of the building.
- 5. Post Exposure Notification:
 - a. In the event that a confirmed positive test result is received on a patient transported in by EMS, every effort will be made to communicate the result back to that transporting EMS agency, as soon as possible. Please be aware that test results are anticipated to take up to ~~72 hours~~ **10 days** to get back and a notification will be provided as soon as possible, **to the agency's supervisor or chief**, either by hospital Infection Control or Department of Health.
 - b. **EMS Providers with suspected exposure to CoVID-19 should report any suspected interaction to their supervisors through your agency specific process. If your agency requires additional support or resources they may contact the PA Department of health. Commonwealth Health has established a 24/7 CoVID-19 hotline for any needs the PA Department of Health may not be able to address. The ED should be utilized ONLY for emergency medical care. At this time, routine testing is not recommended *3.31.2020**
 - i. **Refer to CDC “Return to Work” Guidance for Healthcare Providers**
 - 1. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/hcp-return-work.html>
- 6. Surge Plans:
 - a. At this time, we are hopeful that the precautionary measures taken will quell the transmission; but, each Commonwealth Health facility is taking precautionary steps to pre-plan processes in the event an outbreak of CoVID-19 occurs. At this time there will be no alteration in regular EMS operations; but rest assured, our facilities stand ready to adapt as needed. Any alteration in operating procedures related to EMS to accommodate

a potential influx of patients in the days to come, will be communicated to you as quickly as possible.

- b. UPDATE: As the modeling and projections of the spread of the CoVID-19 virus into Northeast PA has progressed, our facilities have been diligently working to operationalize SURGE and other contingency plans in anticipation of a large patient influx and to take the most appropriate precautions to protect our staff, our EMS partners and our patients. In the coming days you will see some of these pre-planned actions being implemented. The current changes at individual facilities can be found on the pages accompanying this communication. As this situation is dynamic and continually evolving every attempt will be made to keep this information as up to date as possible and communicate changes effectively. 4/5/2020**

7. Con-Ed Classes / Clinical:

- a. ALL Con-Ed Classes & Clinical rotations associated with Commonwealth Health are canceled/postponed until further notice.

Our EMS Partners throughout the region are an integral part of our team and we sincerely appreciate everything you do for our health system and the communities we call home. We thank you for the tireless effort and sacrifice you give to provide the high level of service the residents of our communities receive. As we all navigate these difficult times, we stand with you as your partner. Take care of yourselves and your families, and take care of each other. *WE* will get through this challenge together - as a community.

Please feel free to contact us with any questions,

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Supplemental Information:

Please refer to the following pages for continuing and updated information related to facility specific operational process changes related to EMS.

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Wilkes-Barre General

Address:

575 North River Street, Wilkes-Barre PA 18764

Medical Command Phone Line:

(570) 552-1038

Non-Emergent Transport Access:

Old ED Access - Keypad Entry has been disabled. Upon arrival for pickup or dropoff call (570) 552-1096 and wait for an escort.

General EMS ED Arrivals:

All patients and EMS staff are to be masked

CoVID Suspicious ED Arrivals:

Call EMS notification line at (570) 552-1038 again Upon ED arrival and confirm access route. Patients Arriving via EMS that screen as CoVID suspicious Will be directed to park on the N. Franklin Street side of the building. EMS is requested to bring these patients into the building on the franklin street side via a dedicated entrance to a walled off area. An area for doffing Contaminated PPE will be provided and any entrance into the main ED should be limited.



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Regional Hospital - Scranton

Address:	746 Jefferson Ave - Scranton, PA 18510
Medical Command Phone Line:	(570) 770-3140
Non-Emergent Transport Access:	Standard Operating Process - All Patients & EMS staff are asked to be masked upon entry.
General EMS ED Arrivals:	Standard Operating Process - All patients and EMS staff are asked to be masked upon entry.
Interfacility suspected CoVID Arrivals:	All patients and EMS staff are asked to be masked upon entry. When bringing a suspected CoVID-19 patient through the ED for floor access, Call the EMS notification line (570) 770-3140 upon arrival and notify ED staff that you are in the ambulance bay needing an escort through the emergency department to the floor.
CoVID Suspicious ED Arrivals:	Notify receiving facility of suspected CoVID-19 status as early as possible with the initial report. Upon arrival at the ED Call EMS notification line at (570) 770-3140 again to notify ED staff of your arrival and need for an escort into the department (If patient condition warrants).

Moses Taylor Hospital

Address: 700 Quincy Ave - Scranton, PA 18510
Medical Command Phone Line: **(570) 963-0154**
Non-Emergent Transport Access: Standard Operating Process - All Patients & EMS staff are asked to be masked upon entry.
General EMS ED Arrivals: Standard Operating Process - All patients and EMS staff are asked to be masked upon entry.
Interfacility suspected CoVID Arrivals: All patients and EMS staff are asked to be masked upon entry. When bringing a suspected CoVID-19 patient through the ED for floor access, Call the EMS notification line (570) 963-0154 upon arrival and notify ED staff that you are in the ambulance bay needing an escort through the emergency department to the floor.
CoVID Suspicious ED Arrivals: Notify receiving facility of suspected CoVID-19 status as early as possible with the initial report. Upon arrival at the ED Call EMS notification line at (570) 963-0154 again to notify ED staff of your arrival and need for an escort into the department (If patient condition warrants). When deemed appropriate, suspected CoVID patients will be directed to a tented screening area on the right side of the ambulance bay and patients will be brought into the department into a segmented area.



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Tyler Memorial Hospital

Address:	5950 State Rt. 6 - Tunkhannock, PA 18657
Medical Command Phone Line:	(570) 836-6476
Non-Emergent Transport Access:	Standard Operating Process - All Patients & EMS staff are asked to be masked upon entry.
General EMS ED Arrivals:	Standard Operating Process - All patients and EMS staff are asked to be masked upon entry.
CoVID Suspicious ED Arrivals:	Notify receiving facility of suspected CoVID-19 status as early as possible with the initial report. Upon arrival at the ED Call EMS notification line at (570) 886-6476 again to notify ED staff of your arrival and need for an escort into the department (If patient condition warrants).

Berwick Hospital

Address:	701 E. 16th St - Berwick, PA 18603
Medical Command Phone Line:	(570) 759-5270
Non-Emergent Transport Access:	Standard Operating Process - All Patients & EMS staff are asked to be masked upon entry.
General EMS ED Arrivals:	Standard Operating Process - All patients and EMS staff are asked to be masked upon entry.
CoVID Suspicious ED Arrivals:	Notify receiving facility of suspected CoVID-19 status as early as possible with the initial report. Upon arrival at the ED Call EMS notification line at (570) 759-5270 again to notify ED staff of your arrival and need for an escort into the department (If patient condition warrants).