

MONITOR & MITIGATE

The Impact of COVID-19 on Public Safety

Direct Effects: The Impact Of COVID-19 On First Responders

COVID-19 presents innumerable challenges to first responders. There are three ways it may affect your organization:

Environmental Effects – Changes in the operational environment, available resources, work conditions, or the level or type of demand for services.

Direct Effects – Threats to your personnel from illness related to COVID-19, including absenteeism, emotional trauma, and reductions in productivity.

Indirect Effects – Impacts on your operations due to the combination of environmental and direct effects. These include changes to how services are delivered, training slowdowns, or increased healthcare costs.

You can mitigate the impact of this pandemic on your community. Your response, and the actions of community members, will make the difference.

Direct Effects – Direct effects are driven by exposure to SARS-CoV-2, or fear of exposure, both on and off the job. Potential direct effects include:

1. Mortality: Infected personnel may die from COVID-19.
2. Disability: COVID infection may result in long-term health problems, limiting your infected personnel's ability to perform their original duties in the future.
3. Quarantines: Personnel exposed to COVID-19 on the job may be quarantined and unable to work.
4. Absenteeism: Personnel infected by COVID-19 will be absent from work or may miss work providing care to family members.
5. Fear of Exposure: Your personnel may change how and to whom they provide services to limit exposure. Inadequate availability of PPE may increase fear.
6. Productivity Reductions: Fear of exposure may reduce productivity.
7. Emotional Trauma: Psychological trauma may occur from seeing coworkers, friends and family infected, as well as fear of repeated exposure on the job.
8. Workplace Transmission: First responders infected with COVID-19 may also unknowingly transmit the virus to co-workers or the community.

IN THIS BRIEF

- Defining Direct Effects
- Examples of Direct Effects
- Ways You Can Protect Your Organization and Personnel

RELEVANT FOR



SO WHAT?

Your people are your best resource. Protecting them is the right thing to do and will help save you time and energy in the future. Even keeping one person from infection will save your resources and perhaps their life.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The goal of the project is to measure the impact of COVID-19 on first responders, identify and share best practices organizations can put in place to protect themselves in the short term, and identify strategies to make first responder organizations more resilient to pandemics in the future.

RESOURCE REFERRALS



For project news and updates:

- Visit www.start.umd.edu/COVIDFirstResponders
- Subscribe to START's newsletter at www.start.umd.edu/newsletters
- Follow us on social media with #COVIDFirstResponders

NEW RESEARCH

Read this important research on direct effects of COVID-19 and First Responders

1. *Ambulance ventilation systems can increase protection of EMS personnel*
2. *The long-term health effects of COVID-19*

IN THE NEWS

Learn more about COVID-related direct effects in the news:

1. *Entire Chelsea, OK Police Department Quarantined*
2. *EMS Workers Quarantined After Exposure in the Lehigh Valley*



HOW YOU CAN
HELP

Quarantines & Absenteeism – COVID-related quarantines and absenteeism vary across organizations. It is more significant for those in high-risk areas.

- In NYC, more than 11,000 firefighters (FF) and 4,400 EMS providers were providing services during the pandemic in spring 2020. In an analysis of medical leave, 1,792 of 4,408 EMS responders (40.7%) and 3,873 of 11,230 FF (34.5%) were on medical leave for suspected or confirmed COVID-19 from March - June 2020. At its peak, 19.3% of EMS and 13% of all FF were on leave. ([Prezant et al., 2020](#))
- Not all first responders are equally impacted. The CEBCP and the IACP report 60% of responding LE agencies did not report increased COVID-related sick leave. However, 34% reported small reductions in their number of available officers. ([Lum et al., 2020](#))

Mortality

- The National Law Enforcement Officer Memorial Fund (NLEOMF) reports that while fatalities among law enforcement are down 14% from January - June 2020, compared to the same period in 2019, more than 50% are COVID-related. 140 LEOs (including police, sheriff's deputies, federal LE, and corrections officers) died from COVID-19 contracted on the job. ([nleomf.org/](#))
- The National Fallen Fire Fighters Association indicates more than 50 COVID-related fatalities among fire (31) and EMS (23) in the first six months of 2020 (<https://www.firehero.org/>). The US Fire Administration reports COVID-19 is the leading cause of death among firefighters ([usfa.fema.gov](#)).

What Can You Do?

- Everyone gets fatigued from the constant use of PPE. Short monthly refresher training on the proper usage of PPE could reduce exposure and infection among your personnel.
- Identify positions where absenteeism could cause disproportionate harm to service delivery. Train staff so they can support if needed.

There are a variety of ways that you can contribute to this effort and help protect your brothers and sisters in the first responder community:

1. Participate in an online study with the START and Second Sight Team.
2. Contribute your data to the IAFC First Responders Personnel Impact Survey.
3. Respond to the National Police Foundation Survey on the Impact of COVID-19 on Law Enforcement Agencies.

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