

South Algonquin Fire Department

Advice and Guidance regarding Covid-19 infection.

Hand Hygiene

Hand hygiene is the most important measure in preventing the spread of COVID19. The use of an alcohol-based hand rub containing 70-90% alcohol (isopropanol or ethanol) is the most effective method of hand hygiene as it kills organisms in seconds when applied correctly. Washing hands with soap and water is an effective method to remove microorganisms. Soap suspends easily removable organisms from the skin and allows them to be rinsed off.

Alcohol-based hand rubs are the preferred method for cleaning hands, with the exception of when hands are visibly soiled. When hands are visibly soiled, either wash hands with soap and water OR remove the soil with a moistened towel/towelette followed by alcohol-based hand rub. Hands must be rubbed until completely dry. It is important not to touch one's face and mucous membranes (including eyes) with the hands until appropriate hand hygiene has been completed.

Hand hygiene shall be performed:

- before donning personal protective equipment;
- immediately after removing gloves and personal protective equipment;
- before contact with the responder's face;
- before cleaning/decontamination of equipment and vehicles; and
- after cleaning/decontamination of equipment and vehicles.

In addition to the points above, it is considered best practice to perform hand hygiene:

- any time hands are visibly soiled;
- before and after handling food;
- before and after smoking;
- after using the bathroom, or other personal body functions (e.g. sneezing, coughing);
- whenever there is doubt about the necessity to do so.

Gloves

Gloves are to be used as an additional measure, not as a substitute for proper hand hygiene. Medical grade, non-latex, non-sterile gloves shall be worn;

- Do not wash or re-use gloves;
- gloves should not be worn in the cab of fire apparatus to prevent contamination of surfaces and equipment; and

- hand hygiene must be performed immediately after removing gloves, before touching one's nose, mouth or eyes, or touching another person.

Masks

The routine use of a Particulate Respirator is recommended if you are caring for a patient.

Masks should be:

- donned and doffed according to the manufacturer's instructions;
- removed carefully, down and away from one's face, using the straps so as not to self-contaminate;
- changed if crushed, wet or contaminated by patient or fire fighters' secretions; and
- seal checked on each use.

Perform hand hygiene after removal of the mask.

Protective Eyewear

Protective eyewear shall be worn;

- Prescription eye glasses do not provide adequate protection against splashes and sprays.
- Fire fighters must wear appropriate protective eyewear specifically designed to be worn over prescription eye glasses.
- Protective eyewear must be removed carefully to prevent self-contamination.
- Following the removal of eye protection, perform hand hygiene.

The CDC is advising there is currently no vaccine to prevent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus.

However, as a reminder, CDC always recommends everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases, including:

- Avoid close contact (3-6ft) with people and especially those who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
 - If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.
- Keep your unwashed hands from your face
- Avoid handshakes – fist and elbow bumps are back or the air “high 5” is appropriate.