



Law Enforcement Officer Exposure to COVID-19

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness that can be severe and life-threatening in some individuals. It is easily spread from person to person. The guidance below outlines information for law enforcement in assessing exposure risk to COVID-19.

Exposure Risk Levels with Considerations for Agency Actions:¹⁻³

As defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), exposure risk is grouped into categories ranging from high to none. The information below provides guidance for agencies to identify exposure risk and outlines purposeful action for agencies to consider following personnel exposure to COVID-19.



CDC High Risk Exposure

- Living in the same household as, being an intimate partner of, or providing care in a nonhealthcare setting (such as a home) for a person with symptomatic laboratory confirmed COVID-19 infection **without using recommended precautions.**
- Direct exchange of secretions to mucus membranes from laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 infection {e.g. cough into face with no protective personal equipment (PPE)}.

Considerations for Agency Actions in Response to High Risk Exposure:

- ➔ To ensure continuity of operations of essential functions, CDC advises that critical infrastructure workers such as law enforcement personnel may be permitted to continue work following potential exposure to COVID-19, provided they remain asymptomatic and additional precautions are implemented to protect them and the community.
- ➔ Officers who have had an exposure to COVID-19 but remain asymptomatic should adhere to the following practices prior to and during their work shift:

- **Pre-Screen:** Employers should measure the individual's temperature and assess symptoms prior to the start of their shift.
- **Regular Monitoring:** Individuals should self-monitor in accordance with their employer's occupational health policy.
- **Wear a Mask:** Individuals should wear a face mask at all times while in the workplace for 14 days following the last exposure.
- **Social Distance:** The individual should maintain six feet and practice social distancing as work duties permit.
- **Disinfect:** The individual should routinely clean and disinfect all areas, including shared equipment.
- ➔ In the event the officer becomes sick during the day, and develops symptoms consistent with COVID-19, they should be sent home immediately and follow guidance for **Law Enforcement Sickness with COVID-19.** Information on any individual they had contact with during the time they had symptoms, and two days prior, should also be identified and considered exposed.⁴

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-risk-assessment-hcp.html>

² Officer/Personnel Exposure Plan: Procedures for Possible or Confirmed COVID-19 Exposure (Dallas Police Department)

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/critical-workers-implementing-safety-practices.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/critical-workers-implementing-safety-practices.pdf>

CDC Medium Risk Exposure

- Close contact with a person with symptomatic laboratory-confirmed COVID-19.
- Being seated in a department vehicle with a partner who is symptomatic and has a laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 infection.

Considerations for Agency Actions in Response to Medium Risk Exposure:

- Follow Considerations for Agency Actions in Response to High Risk Exposure outlined above.⁵

CDC Low Risk Exposure

- Being in the same indoor environment (e.g., a detail room, a hospital waiting room) as a person with symptomatic laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 for a prolonged period of time but not meeting the definition of close contact. See below for definition of close contact.

Considerations for Agency Actions in Response to Low Risk Exposure:

- The CDC recommends that individuals with low risk exposure do not require restrictions from work.⁶
- These individuals should check their temperature twice daily and remain alert for respiratory symptoms consistent with COVID-19.
- In the event the individual develops symptoms consistent with COVID-19, they should immediately self-isolate and follow guidance in the tool titled **Law Enforcement Officer Sickness with COVID-19**.

CDC No Identifiable Risk Exposure

- Interactions with a person with symptomatic laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 infection that do not meet any of the high-, medium- or low-risk conditions above, such as walking by the person or being briefly in the same room.

Considerations for Agency Actions in Response to No Identifiable Risk Exposure:

- The CDC recommends that individuals with no identifiable risk do not require restrictions from work.⁷

Definition of Close Contact

- Prolonged contact within 6 feet with a confirmed COVID-19 person.
- Prolonged contact within 6 feet with a symptomatic person (presenting with fever and respiratory complaints) who has traveled to an affected region within the last 14 days.

Considerations:

- There is no consensus on the definition of “prolonged contact” across public health agencies. What is known is that prolonged contact depends on not just distance and duration but also how much personal protective equipment the officer is wearing (if any), how contagious the infected person is, and how susceptible to infection the individual may be.

⁵ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/critical-workers-implementing-safety-practices.pdf>

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-risk-assessment-hcp.html>



COMMUNICATE

- Law enforcement executives should communicate on a regular basis about developments in response to COVID-19. This includes changes in department policy or procedure in responding to calls for service, medical-aid calls, calls to a hospital or medical facility, traffic enforcement, and more.
- Law enforcement agencies should ensure that changes in policy or procedure are clearly communicated to, and in collaboration with, community stakeholders. Community stakeholders should include public safety groups such as employee representative groups, department of corrections, surrounding law enforcement organizations, judicial offices, other first responder jurisdictions, Fire, EMS, etc., as well as community groups, neighborhood watches, faith-based groups, etc.
- Law enforcement agencies should work with their human resources department to identify a mechanism for tracking the number of law enforcement personnel out of work resulting from the potential contraction of COVID-19.
- Supervisors should provide clear guidance to personnel regarding protocol for sick leave usage in the event an officer becomes ill and unable to work.



IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

- Monitor and follow all guidance provided by the CDC and your local and state/provincial public health agencies.
- Expand law enforcement response to include telephone reporting and provide guidance for officers to complete a telephone report. Telephone reports are intended and should be employed for offenses that do not require a police response due to violence, life-safety concerns, crimes-in-progress, or the need to collect evidence.
- Restrict or eliminate public access to police facilities in order to minimize exposure of police personnel to COVID-19.
- Implement **virtual or remote roll calls and shift changes** to avoid clustering of people, if possible. Utilize outdoor/open air meetings when weather permits.
- Provide proper training for use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for respiratory protection, if available. Encourage agency personnel to practice regular handwashing and maintaining a distance of at least six feet to provide protection from transmission of COVID-19.

- Allow adequate time for officers to decontaminate after public contact.
- Clean and disinfect equipment, common areas, and transport vehicles frequently.
- Consider postponement or alternative methods to hold meetings with community groups.
- Allow non-traditional work-from-home for less-essential staff.
- Explore alternative housing options for law enforcement personnel on a case-by-case basis to limit potential exposure of COVID-19 to at-risk family members.
- Consider easy wash and wear uniforms for uniformed officers and relaxed casual wash and wear clothing for detectives and others who normally wear more formal clothing.



DISINFECT

- Officers should avoid direct contact with individuals who may have COVID-19 until they have the appropriate PPE. Maintaining a distance of at least six feet may provide protection from transmission of COVID-19.
- Officers should understand and practice with PPE so that they can rapidly and safely apply and carefully remove PPE without cross-contamination.
- In the event an officer becomes exposed to an ill suspect or member of the public with a fever and respiratory illness, the officer should:
 - Wear a face mask at all times while in the workplace for 14 days after last exposure.⁸
 - Clean and disinfect his/her duty belt and gear with a household cleaning spray or wipe prior to reuse.
 - Follow standard operating procedures for the containment and disposal of used PPE.
 - Follow standard operating procedures for containing and laundering clothes. This includes avoiding shaking the clothes.⁹
 - Follow guidance for high-risk and medium-risk exposure.

To access tools and resources to assist in informing your agency response to COVID-19, visit the [CRI-TAC COVID-19 Library of Resources](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-law-enforcement.html), a compilation of resources by the field of law enforcement, for the field of law enforcement.

8 <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html>

9 <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-law-enforcement.html>

