

## **Operating Guideline # 1102**

### **Infectious Disease Control**

**April 8, 2020**



#### **PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this Operating Guideline (OG) is to establish guidelines to prevent personnel from contracting a communicable disease in the course of their duties and to outline reporting requirements.

#### **ISSUE/RATIONALE:**

Firefighters risk contracting communicable diseases from exposure to blood, body fluids, secretions, excretions, mucous membranes, non-intact skin, sharps, medical waste or soiled items. Routine practices for infection prevention and exposure control are based on the premise that all persons are potentially infectious, even when they display no symptoms (are asymptomatic).

#### **GUIDELINE:**

1. The Incident Commander will be responsible to conduct a "Point of Care" risk assessment at every incident that has the potential to involve patient care activities and determine (and communicate to all staff at the incident) the minimum level of protective clothing to be worn. Hand, eye, skin and respiratory protection shall be considered in each circumstance.
2. All personnel shall follow "universal precautions" at all medical calls, motor vehicle accidents or any time where they may be involved in patient care.
3. Universal precautions shall include - as a minimum - latex (or equivalent) **gloves** and **protective eyewear**. In cases where respiratory infections are indicated or where the patient is febrile (feverish), **N95 masks** shall also be worn. The gloves and N95 masks shall be changed after contact with each patient and placed in a plastic bag when discarded for later disposal, while protective eyewear may be disinfected.
4. Protective eyewear (not simply face shields) shall be worn during rescue operations which are likely to generate droplets of blood or risk of exposure to body fluids.
5. Hands and other skin surfaces shall be washed immediately after contact with blood or other body substances.
6. Personnel shall take precautions to prevent injuries from sharp objects at scenes.
7. Personnel shall not perform "mouth to mouth resuscitation". A barrier mask or bag valve mask shall be used in all cases.
8. Prior to leaving any incident, the site shall be cleared of contaminated gloves, gauze, bandages, blankets, etc. These items should be collected and placed in plastic bio-hazard bags for later disposal.

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9. Personnel should wash their hands with soap and water upon return to the station.

10. Upon return to the station, equipment may be disinfected by immersing in a 1:9 solution of bleach to hot water for a period of not less than 10 minutes and then rinsed in hot water and dried. Where possible, the persons who were directly involved in the incident should perform disinfection. Fire apparatus that requires it should be cleaned in the same fashion.

11. All work-related exposures to bodily fluids should be documented via the appropriate "Exposure Report".

12. Where a firefighter suspects that they have been exposed to an infectious disease, they shall report the exposure immediately to the Incident Commander who shall notify the "Designated Officer". Where the exposure is discovered following an incident, it shall be reported to the Fire Chief or his designate that will be responsible for completing the necessary reports and notifying the "Designated Officer". Any staff member who is exposed to a potentially infectious disease shall attend the closest medical facility for assessment and treatment. (SEE ALSO OG 1103 – Designated Officer)

13. All staff are encouraged to speak to their own health care provider about the potential benefits of immunization and take additional precautions to protect their own health and that of their families.

#### **RESPONSIBILITY:**

It is the responsibility of all firefighters to comply with the provisions of this Operating Guideline.

#### **REFERENCES:**

- Section 21 Committee Guidance Note GN-4-14, Infection Prevention and Exposure Control
- Section 21 Committee Guidance Note GN-2-5 Designated Officer Program for Communicable Disease
- Section 21 Committee Guidance Note GN-2-7 Reporting Exposures to Biological, Chemical or Physical Agents
- Section 21 Committee Guidance Note GN- 4-1 Application of Firefighters – Protective Equipment Regulation
- Section 21 Committee Guidance Note GN-4-2 Eye Protection
- Section 21 Committee Guidance Note GN-4-9 Respiratory Protection Program
- Section 21 Manual Appendix F: Exposure of Emergency Service Workers to Infectious Diseases Protocol, 2008
- Section 21 Manual Appendix F: Preventing and Assessing Occupational Exposures to Selected Communicable Diseases: An Information Manual for Designated Officers, 1994
- OG 1103 – Designated Officer