

Maine Association for Search and Rescue
Pandemic Response Procedure
April 2, 2020

The MASAR Board of Directors wants to keep teams informed on the latest pandemic response protocols and recommendations as they relate to SAR operations at this time.

Essential Services Designation

SAR volunteers are not specifically named in the Maine State list of essential businesses/services (“Executive Order 19: An Order Regarding Essential Businesses and Operations” dated 24MAR 2020) or the US Department of Homeland Security “Memorandum on Identification of Essential Critical Infrastructure” (dated 19MAR 2020) referenced therein¹. Therefore, official designation as an “essential service” was requested and received, and is attached at the end of this document.

Response Expectations

The Board understands that members may or may not want to respond at this time and we support your decision. Before you respond to a search or rescue call, please make sure to carefully consider your current health and recent travel in your calculations about whether to respond.

- If you are feeling unwell **in any way**, but in particular with elevated temperature, cough, shortness of breath, unexplained fatigue, muscle or joint pain/stiffness, reduced sense of taste/smell, or abdominal pain and diarrhea, please DO NOT respond to any missions.
- If you have recently been out of the state, or country, particularly to an area experiencing an outbreak, please carefully consider whether you should be staying home.
- If you have a pre-existing medical history including immune system disorder, cardiac or respiratory medical history, or you are over the age of 55, please carefully consider whether you should be staying home.

Physical Distancing Procedures:

- Physical distancing guidelines dictate SAR personnel should maintain a distance of at least 6 feet from any other individual who does not live in their household - rescuer, patient, etc. - at all times, with the exception of a litter carry or other unavoidable patient care scenario.
- SAR personnel may not carpool with anyone who does not live in their household, including from the CP area to the staging area.
- Do not enter the CP itself, whether it is indoors or inside the MWS Command Vehicle.
- At CP, with the possible exception of check-in/check-out, stay near/in your vehicle. Staff will come to you as necessary; communicate with them via radio.
- The check-in sheet will be modified to include a license plate number and vehicle description.
- If the Dirigo SAR check-in trailer is present:
 - ONLY members of Dirigo SAR or the Agency Having Jurisdiction will be allowed in the check-in trailer.
 - Only TWO individuals will be allowed in the check-in trailer at any one time, and those two members will follow physical distancing guidelines.
 - Check-ins will be accomplished under a tent canopy outside of the trailer.

- Only TWO individuals will be allowed under the canopy at a time; clipboards will be passed around at arms' length.
 - Personnel should either use hand sanitizer after handling the clipboard/pen, or wear gloves.
- If the check-in area is located indoors:
 - Only ONE individual will be allowed into the indoor check-in area at a time; clipboards will be brought outside and passed around at arms' length.
 - Personnel should either use hand sanitizer after handling the clipboard/pen, or wear gloves.
- Search teams should be no more than 5 people; speak up if you are assigned to a larger team.
- When you return to the CP area after your assignment, use your radio to announce your arrival back and where you are located in the staging area. An operations person will find you to question you and get your GPS, or Command will give you further instructions.
- Bring as much of your own food and water as you can, to minimize contact with people.
- No more than 5 SAR personnel will be allowed into the food area at a time, and personnel should eat in their cars.
- At some point clean, disinfect the inside of your vehicle's steering wheel, knobs, handles inside and out, as well as your cell phones, wallets, credit cards, etc as much as you can.

Personal Protective Equipment:

- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is essential to your safety when responding. Minimal gear requirements at this time include: gloves, wrap-around eye protection, and ideally a mask² of some kind; even a bandanna may decrease risk.
- SAR personnel are encouraged to wear a mask (of some kind) or bandanna over their mouth and nose at all times, both to reduce risk of accidental contamination by an asymptomatic carrier and to remind them not to touch their face.
- All personal protective gear should be worn with ANY indication of risk. You should remove yourself from any rescue with a high-risk patient if you lack the appropriate PPE.
- For litter carries, the patient must be given wraparound eye protection. SAR personnel located near the patient's head and face should make every effort not to lean over the patient's face. Medical personnel will determine whether a mask (of some kind) should be used to cover the patient's face and nose; certain types of masks place more strain on the lungs and heart.

Identifying Risk Factors/Levels:

- In the event that responding MASAR members make the initial patient contact, the one highest medically-qualified MASAR member should approach the patient; other members should maintain at least 6 feet of distance from the patient and each other.
- If MASAR personnel are not the initial contact point with the patient, the highest medically-qualified MASAR member will speak with whoever has been with the patient, to attempt to determine risk levels without exposure to the patient.
- Risk determination should include answers to the following:
 - Has the patient recently experienced, or are they experiencing, the following symptoms - elevated temperature, cough, shortness of breath, unexplained fatigue, muscle or joint pain/stiffness, reduced sense of taste/smell, or abdominal pain and diarrhea?

- Has the patient recently had close contact with someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19, or who has recently been showing these symptoms?
- Once that MASAR member has received a report of patient condition, they will advise other team members of risk and all members will put on personal protection equipment as necessary.

In Case Of Exposure:

- If you are exposed to someone who is infected when responding to a SAR call, you should immediately notify your team leader, as well as your team's President or other designated representative, who, in turn, will notify the Agency Having Jurisdiction (AHJ).
- MEMBERS NEED TO CONTACT THEIR PRIMARY CARE PROVIDER TO REQUEST A TEST. Make sure you say "I am a First Responder."
- You should undress before entering your home, gather the clothes you were wearing into a plastic bag, take a shower, use physical distancing with all your family members, and notify your healthcare provider by phone.
- Until further guidance is received to the contrary, we will treat exposure as a Workers' Comp Insurance issue.

How To Care For Personal Equipment:

- All equipment used on a mission should be decontaminated post-mission.
- It is essential to clean/disinfect equipment - particularly things that many people touch: i.e. litter, wheel, gear tubs, RR gear, clipboards and pens, vehicle door latches, etc.
- The CDC now recommends taking all clothes with potential contamination off before you enter your home, and place them in a plastic bag. Do not shake dirty laundry; this minimizes the possibility of dispersing the virus through the air. Wash items as appropriate in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. If possible, launder items using the warmest appropriate water setting for the items and dry items completely. Dirty laundry that has been in contact with an ill person can be washed with other people's items.

Trainings and Meetings:

- Teams are encouraged to change all classroom training sessions to an online video conference format if possible.
- Until further guidance is received to the contrary, training sessions attended by fewer than 10 members of MASAR teams in an outdoor setting are assumed to be acceptable, as long as physical distance and PPE guidelines are followed.
 - Send an email to Mike Sawyer prior to each training session, noting the date/time, location, and names of those expected to attend. Send another email afterward confirming that the training session occurred, and the names of those who attended.
 - Do not allow any non-members, or anyone from out of state/country, to attend a training.
 - Immediately prior to the training session, ask all expected attendees the following questions. Any yes answers disqualifies the member from attending.
 - Have you recently experienced, or are they experiencing, the following symptoms - elevated temperature, cough, shortness of breath, unexplained fatigue, muscle or joint pain/stiffness, reduced sense of taste/smell, or abdominal pain and diarrhea?

- Have you recently had close contact with someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19, or who has recently been showing these symptoms?
- Have you traveled out of state within the last 2 weeks?
- The 2020 MASAR Conference has been rescheduled to May 14-16, 2021.
- Until further guidance is received to the contrary, the June 7 MASAR meeting is currently still scheduled, but please watch for updates. It is possible that it may shift to a video conference format or be postponed.

¹ *It is worth noting that the USDHS Memorandum was later revised to include SAR volunteers in the Law Enforcement category, however, this is not the version that is referenced in the Governor's Executive Order, and that Executive Order has not been revised.*

² *A note regarding masks, from Lt Adam: If IF&W personnel have N-95 masks we are required to fill out a medical questionnaire, have it reviewed by a nurse, then do a fit test for the specific type mask that they have. These are Department of Labor requirements. Not sure how they apply to you as a non-profit.*



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC
AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



JANET T. MILLS
GOVERNOR

HEATHER JOHNSON
COMMISSIONER

April 2, 2020

Maine Association for Search And Rescue
Sharon Kenney
Statewide Residence and Response
Any Town ME 04401

Dear Sharon,

We have received your designation request.

After careful review, it has been determined that Maine Association for Search And Rescue does align with the intent of and interests served by the Governor's Executive Order 28FY19/20 and therefore is considered an essential business within the meaning of the Order.

We strongly urge you to implement physical distancing measures and provide employees with the resources that they need to maintain a safe work environment. The best thing that Maine people can do to protect their health is to practice physical distancing and take the same preventive measures that avoid catching a cold. Wash your hands often for 20 seconds. Cover coughs and sneezes. Stay home if you are sick. Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, shortness of breath, and lower respiratory distress. Call ahead to a health care professional if you develop a fever and symptoms of respiratory illness.

I would like to thank you for the hard work you are doing to support the needs of our state and the needs of your employees. Although these are challenging and uncertain times, one thing is certain, Mainers are strong and resilient, and we will get through this together.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to my office with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Heather Johnson".

Commissioner Heather Johnson