



COVID-19: Guidance for Emergency Service Responders/first responders

22nd September 2020

This guidance note is a summary of Government Guidance in relation to [Emergency Service Responders](#) who may in the course of their front line duties come into contact with individuals with COVID-19.

This note also refers to the application of this guidance in terms of travel undertaken in vehicles (inc. fire appliances).

All published Government Guidance can be accessed from <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>.

Guidance for Emergency staff

The guidance confirms that Emergency Service Responders may be considered exempt from being considered a 'close-contact'* if they have used clinical grade PPE and have received appropriate awareness training in infection prevention and control (IPC).

- As such it is important that when undertaking activities where close contact cannot be avoided with members of the public, personnel **should** wear the PPE identified for the task/activity as per the risk assessment as this may result in an exemption from the need to self-isolate (subject to Tier1 Risk Assessment).
- It is also recommended that for activity with FRS colleagues, such as journeys undertaken in the vehicle (inc. fire engine) where 'close contact' cannot be avoided all crew/staff **should consider** the wearing a Type IIR surgical mask in conjunction with the adoption of effective IPC measures as this may result in an exemption from the need to self-isolate (subject to Tier1 Risk Assessment).
- Drivers who wear glasses **can** be provided with an FFP3 mask given the propensity for glasses to steam up. If the wearing of a FFP3 mask does not address this issue then they should make contact with the Services Health & Safety team for advice.
- Any decision to exempt an Emergency Service Responder from test and trace under this guidance will be undertaken by Tier 1 contact tracers within the local Health Protection Team.
- Emergency Service Responders will be considered a 'close-contact'* and be told to self-isolate in other work situations where they have not been using appropriate PPE.
- Where an emergency service responder has adopted effective IPC and an individual is still told to self-isolate and this has implications for the resilience and continued delivery of service a mechanism exists through which any concerns can be escalated to the Local Health Protection Team to consider an exemption from self-isolation.

*Public Health England defines a close contact with someone who has tested positive for Covid-19 as any one of the following:

- face to face contact within 1m metre or less (including any incident of coughing, being spat at, or skin to skin contact)
- contact within 2m for 15 minutes or longer in total
- a person who has travelled in a small vehicle with; or in a large vehicle or plane near to someone who has tested positive *for COVID-19*

Operational Considerations

- Services should consider the use of a Type IIR surgical mask for operational staff when travelling in an appliance where 'close contact' cannot be avoided. This should be considered in consultation with local health protection teams and directors of public health.
- All masks should be worn in accordance with published guidance.
- Line Managers must ensure staff *[have access to / are provided with]* a fresh Type IIR surgical masks at the start of each shift and as required.
- Line Managers must ensure operational staff have completed the relevant awareness training which can be accessed on the *[insert learning platform]*.

Following a staff member testing positive for COVID-19 the internal Occupational Health team should be in a position to confirm all potential contacts in the relevant period (48 hours prior to the onset of symptoms; or 48 hours prior to the taking of the positive test in asymptomatic cases), along with any additional details relating to journeys undertaken in the relevant period.

In the first instance the Occupational Health team will consider the potential impacts on operational service provision of the requirement for crew members identified as close contacts to self-isolate.

Where necessary and as appropriate XXXX will contact the local Health Protection Team to request a risk assessment is completed to determine the requirement to self-isolate.

Full details relating to all journeys / activities undertaken, PPE worn and confirmation of completion of IPC awareness training should be provided to assist the tier 1 tracers in the Health Protection Team.

Where an exemption is provided there will be no requirement for staff identified as close contacts to self-isolate and they are able to remain on duty following existing social distancing arrangements.

All staff will be aware that government guidance relating to Covid19 is regularly being revised and updated. Further guidance will be issued as appropriate to reflect changes.

Staff should continue to refer to the guidance published by Public Health England and on Gov.uk in relation to coronavirus.