

COVID-19

Directive #4 for Ambulance Services and Paramedics under the *Ambulance Act* – Revised March 30, 2020

**THIS DIRECTIVE REPLACES THE DIRECTIVE #4 ISSUED ON MARCH 24, 2020. THE
DIRECTIVE #4 ISSUED ON MARCH 24, 2020 IS REVOKED AND THE FOLLOWING
SUBSTITUTED:**

Issued under Section 77.7 of the Health Protection and Promotion Act (HPPA), R.S.O. 1990, c. H.7

WHEREAS under section 77.7(1) of the HPPA, if the Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) is of the opinion that there exists or there may exist an immediate risk to the health of persons anywhere in Ontario, he or she may issue a directive to any health care provider or health care entity respecting precautions and procedures to be followed to protect the health of persons anywhere in Ontario;

AND WHEREAS, under section 77.7(2) of the HPPA, for the purposes of section 77.7(1), the CMOH must consider the precautionary principle where in the opinion of the CMOH there exists or there may exist an outbreak of an infectious or communicable disease and the proposed directive relates to worker health and safety in the use of any protective clothing, equipment or device;

AND HAVING REGARD TO the emerging evidence about the ways this virus transmits between people as well as the potential severity of illness it causes in addition to the declaration by the World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11, 2020 that COVID-19 is a pandemic virus and the spread of COVID-19 in Ontario, and the technical guidance provided on March 12, 2020 by Public Health Ontario on scientific recommendations by the WHO regarding infection prevention and control measures for COVID-19;

AND HAVING REGARD TO the recommendations provided by Public Health Ontario and the WHO as to the droplet and contact spread of COVID-19, the demonstrated need to ensure the adequate supply of personal protective equipment (PPE) for medical procedures where COVID-19 may become airborne to ensure worker health and safety, including paramedics, and ensuring adequate supply of personal protective equipment during the duration of COVID-19 for the protection of health care workers, including paramedics, for such medical procedures;

AND HAVING REGARD TO the precautionary principle, which in my opinion has been met, in that this directive will protect health care workers' health and safety in the use of any protective clothing, equipment and device and the failure to adhere to this directive may put worker health and safety at risk;

I AM THEREFORE OF THE OPINION that there exists or may exist an immediate risk to the health of persons anywhere in Ontario from COVID-19;

AND DIRECT pursuant to the provisions of section 77.7 of the HPPA that:

Directive #4 for Ambulance Services and Paramedics under the Ambulance Act

Date of Issuance: March 30, 2020

Effective Date of Implementation: March 30, 2020

Issued To: Ambulance Services and paramedics within the meaning of the *Ambulance Act* and paramedics referenced in section 77.7(6), paragraphs 7 and 8 of the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*.

Introduction:

Coronaviruses (CoV) are a large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV), Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV), and COVID-19. A novel coronavirus is a new strain that has not been previously identified in humans.

On December 31, 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) [was informed](#) of cases of pneumonia of unknown etiology in Wuhan City, Hubei Province in China. A novel coronavirus (COVID-19) [was identified](#) as the causative agent by Chinese authorities on January 7, 2020.

On March 11, 2020 the WHO announced that COVID-19 is classified as a [pandemic](#) virus. This is the first pandemic caused by a coronavirus.

On March 17, 2020 the Premier and Cabinet declared an emergency in Ontario under the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* due to the outbreak of COVID-19 in Ontario and Cabinet made emergency orders to implement my recommendations of March 16, 2020.

On March 24, 2020 a Directive was issued to Ambulance Services and Paramedics under the Ambulance Act requiring surgical masks to be used for suspected COVID-19 patients and fluid-resistant N95 respirators to be used for aerosol generating medical procedures (AGMPs). In addition, based on a point of care risk assessment, it may be appropriate to use N95 respirators for situations other than COVID-19. That Directive is revoked and is replaced by this Directive.

Symptoms of COVID-19

Symptoms range from mild – like the flu and other common respiratory infections – to severe, and can include:

- fever
- cough
- difficulty breathing

Complications from COVID-19 can include serious conditions, like pneumonia or kidney failure, and in some cases, death.

There are no specific treatments for coronaviruses, and there is no vaccine that protects against coronaviruses. Most people with common human coronavirus illnesses will recover on their own.

Required Precautions

- A point-of-care risk assessment (PCRA) must be performed by every paramedic before every patient interaction.
- At a minimum, contact and droplet precautions must be used by paramedics for all interactions with suspected, presumed or confirmed COVID-19 patients. Contact and droplet precautions includes gloves, face shields or goggles, gowns, and surgical/procedure masks.
- If a patient suspected of COVID-19 is anticipated to require a necessary aerosol generating medical procedure (AGMP), paramedics should, based on a point of care risk assessment and clinical and professional judgement, change into an N95 respirator, or approved equivalent or better protection.
- Based on a point of care risk assessment, it may be appropriate to use N95 respirators for situations other than COVID-19.

Note: This directive is a change in current practices respecting COVID-19 based on a better understanding of the epidemiology of the virus and the spectrum of illness that it causes, three months into this COVID-19 outbreak. It has been made in close consultation with Public Health Ontario and I have considered the Precautionary Principle in issuing this directive.

As this outbreak evolves, there will be continual review of emerging evidence to understand the most appropriate measures to take. This will continue to be done in collaboration with health system partners and technical experts from Public Health Ontario and with the health system.

Questions

Hospitals and HCWs may contact the ministry's Health Care Provider Hotline at 1-866-212-2272 or by email at emergencymanagement.moh@ontario.ca with questions or concerns about this Directive.

Hospitals and HCWs are also required to comply with applicable provisions of the [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#) and its Regulations.



David C. Williams, MD, MHSc, FRCPC
Chief Medical Officer of Health