

Emergency Medical
Services

Date: Nov 10, 2020

To: AHS EMS Direct Delivery Staff
EMS Contracted Service Providers
Medical First Responders

From: AHS EMS Provincial Coordination Center

Re: **Winter PPE Interim Guidance**

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, frontline staff are finding the need to don Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) more often. Unfortunately, this need will not change in the coming months as winter weather conditions have returned to Alberta. In an effort to provide guidance to frontline staff in the use of PPE working in during winter weather conditions, an AHS EMS Winter PPE Working Group has been established. The AHS EMS Winter PPE Working Group consists of frontline staff, EMS leadership, EMS Logistics & Support, Infection Prevention & Control (IP&C) and Workplace Health & Safety (WHS). This group has been brought together to develop interim guidelines and new strategies on how to better cope with the challenges presented by PPE in our winter climate. The importance of finding a balance between keeping warm, high visibility, and contact & droplet precautions has been considered and endorsed by WHS, IP&C and this working group.

The following recommendations have been provided for all frontline practitioners (Direct Delivery, Contact Service Providers and Medical First Responders) regarding contact & droplet precautions in the winter, which will also be updated in the interim guidance document this week, located on AHSEMS.com:

- Follow the Standard Approach and Ongoing Assessment.
- Perform Point of Care Risk Assessment (PCRA).
- Perform hand hygiene.
- Don appropriate PPE based on the PCRA.
- Don eye protection prior to patient care or entering patient care areas.
- Adhere to continuous masking with surgical/procedure masks.
- N95 respirators must be worn under hats or winter toques to ensure there is no interference with the elastic straps and a proper seal can be maintained.
- Hats or toques can become contaminated or soiled during a call. If so, they must be removed and laundered with uniforms after each shift.
- Nitrile gloves can be worn under duty issued winter leather gloves. Leather gloves must be wiped down with hospital grade disinfectant wipes after patient contact. Do not use alcohol based hand rub (ABHR) on leather gloves.
- If contact and droplet precautions are required, a winter coat can be placed over the gown. This will allow the practitioner to remove the winter coat inside ambulance should they become over heated. Winter coats must be wiped down with hospital grade disinfectant wipes after patient contact.

- Should a practitioner choose to wear a gown over their light duty jacket or winter coat, a High Visibility Vest must be worn over the gown when High Visibility is required. The High Visibility Vest shall be wiped down with hospital grade disinfectant wipes after each patient contact.
- All winter coats must be washed/launched after each tour.
- Practitioners must report to duty with clean uniforms. Uniforms should only be worn once and laundered after each shift.
- A second uniform must be brought to work as a backup, should the one currently being worn become soiled or contaminated.

Please note: light duty cloth jackets cannot be wiped down and must be washed with regular duty uniforms.

Thank you.
AHS EMS Provincial Coordination Centre
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