



# Organizational Readiness: Considerations for Preparing Your Agency for COVID-19

*Educate Yourself. Stay Informed. Be Safe.*

As the number of cases of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) increases globally, law enforcement agencies should be prepared for the likelihood that the virus will impact their communities. The following checklist of considerations is offered as guidance to law enforcement agencies without an established emergency operations plan, and as additional points of consideration for agencies with an established emergency operations plan.

**Communicate clearly, consistently, and frequently with agency staff about changing policies and procedures.**

- Prepare officers to answer questions about testing kit availability, travel restrictions, quarantine and isolation, personal safety measures including who the public should call for such information.
- Designate a command staff leader or team to spearhead coordination with external agencies and disseminate information to agency staff.

**Provide personal protective equipment (PPE) to all officers with training on its proper wear, removal, and disposal.**

- Put together Go-Bags that include PPE for officers and first aid supplies for response to community members.
- Increase the frequency of disinfecting patrol cars, holding cells, locker rooms, break rooms, and other agency facilities to reduce exposure to the virus.

**Develop a contingency plan for staffing shortages.**

- Prepare for officers to call out of work out of an abundance of caution or because they or a family member is ill.
- Consider alternative staffing methods such as shared service provision with neighboring agencies, swing shifts, mandatory overtime, cancellation of leave and non-essential travel, and repurposing of officer flex time.
- Cross-train personnel for temporary duty reassignment to assure proper coverage of essential duties.
- Evaluate what services require an on-scene police presence versus those that can be handled by alternative means such as by phone or online.
- Organize a network of off-duty personnel who are on-call and ready to report for duty, if a shift has a critical shortage of officers.

- Offer telecommuting for non-essential staff to ensure proper job coverage.
- Conduct load testing of IT and security systems to ensure resources can withstand a sudden increase in remote access to agency technologies.

**Communicate clearly and consistently to the public as information emerges.**

- Coordinate with national, state, tribal, and local authorities to ensure accurate and consistent information.
- Utilize the agency's Public Information Officer (PIO) to provide information in a timely manner.
- Communicate to combat disinformation about COVID-19, raise awareness of potential virus-related scam efforts, and highlight effective practices.
- Additionally, as testing for COVID-19 becomes more available, law enforcement agencies may need to answer questions about testing kit availability to the public.

**Coordinate with federal/national, state, tribal, and local government agencies as well as the private sector.**

- Maintain consistent communications with the local health department and emergency services to keep officers informed of the most up to date response protocol.
- Coordinate with government agencies responsible for maintaining critical infrastructure (e.g. water, power, transportation) to understand their contingency plans and potential for increased burden on emergency services.
- Determine whether your agency is eligible for federal/national or state funding to aid in emergency response.



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## **Modify standard agency procedures as needed to reflect current response needs.**

- Be prepared for community requests to evolve and reflect the needs of COVID-19 patients, including but not limited to transport to hospitals, wellness checks, and delivery of critical items like medication.
- Officers may be required to enforce revised local or regional public health ordinances, such as mandatory quarantines, isolation, or travel restrictions.
- Provide testing and coordinate treatment to limit the spread of COVID-19 within a jail or prison, if your agency oversees correctional facilities.

## **Utilize incident command systems (ICS) to aid in agency response.**

- Ensure your agency's established incident command system can be activated if needed to assist in command and control, as well as the coordination of limited resources.
- Identify which roles and duties are mission critical, if your agency does not have an incident command system.
- Designated a command-level staff person to oversee and manage the overall agency response.

## **Create a plan for critical incident stress management.**

- Address officer physical and emotional well-being. Increased pressures and continued obligations outside of work, along with the potential of loved ones falling ill, will create stress, fear, and anxiety.
- Activate support services for officers and their families.
- Create additional awareness of employee assistance programs (EAP).

## **Collect data and document response protocols for future review and assessment, if practical.**

- While pandemics rarely occur, an agency can learn a lot about its emergency response by studying past efforts.
- Data collection for law enforcement may include the number of COVID-19-related calls for service, outcomes of incident command system activation, staffing numbers and call outs, health and wellness measures of officers, etc.

### **IACP Resources:**

[IACP Model Policy on Pandemic Flu](#)

[IACP Model Policy on Communicable Disease Prevention](#)

[IACP Model Policy on Incident Command](#)

[IACP Officer Safety & Wellness Resource Center](#)

[Considerations for Pandemic Flu Planning & Response - Police Chief Magazine](#)

[The Pandemic Influenza Plan Implications for Local Law Enforcement - Police Chief Magazine](#)

### **Additional Resources:**

[What Law Enforcement Personnel Need to Know about Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)

[Pandemic Planning for an Influenza Pandemic: Case Studies and Recommendations from the Field](#)

[Law Enforcement Preparedness for Public Health Emergencies: An Executive Summary of the Resources Series](#)

[Risk Management for Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

[Defending Against COVID-19 Cyber Scams](#)

[Washington State Jails Coronavirus Management Suggestions](#)

[American Jail Association COVID-19 Resources](#)

[National Sheriff's Association Coronavirus Information](#)