

Purpose

To provide guidance for strike team leaders (STEN) and strike teams deploying during a pandemic.

Policy

San Diego Metro Zone strike team leaders and strike teams shall follow current best practices to protect themselves, other firefighters, support personnel and the public while on deployment during a pandemic.

All directives, operational tools and guidelines provided by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group will be followed including the Fire and COVID-19 Briefing Checklist.

Procedure

A. Pre-Deployment

1. Pandemic Strike Team Kits

- 1) Each agency shall have access to kits that meet or exceed the 2020 NWCG COVID-19 Wildland Response for Fire Season Preparation document
 - a) Kits should be pre-assembled for easy pick up or carried on the apparatus
 - b) Examples of kit configurations are detailed below

B. During Deployment

1. Module as One

- a. When on a strike team or an overhead assignment, crews are to follow “Module as One” practices
 - b. A “Module as One” considers a group of firefighters as an individual for the purposes of potential infectious exposure and transmission
 - c. In the strike team configuration, a “Module as One” is the crew who rides together in the same vehicle, works together on fire assignments and remains together when off duty
 - d. During a deployment (from departure until return home), a module should remain intact (no individual crew members may be replacement or rotations into or out of the module)
 - e. In case of a deployment longer than 14 to 21 days the entire module will be rotated as a group
 - f. Fire managers will consider all members exposed if one member of the module has a positive exposure
2. STENs will become familiar with incident pandemic procedures upon arrival at the incident
 - a. Procedures may vary slightly to conform to incident complexities

- b. If a variance to these procedures occurs or is necessary, STENs will ensure communication and coordination with the zone coordinator and the home agency
- 3. Health and Safety
 - a. Metro Zone STENs will become familiar with the pandemic procedures of each agency on the strike team as part of the initial deployment safety briefing
 - b. STENs will have contact information for each agency's designated infection control officer (DICO) and duty chief
 - c. Utilize the NWCG Covid-19 Safety Briefing Checklist as a reference
 - d. Metro Zone personnel will utilize a twice daily health screening and document on provided logs or ICS-214
 - e. Personnel who become symptomatic during deployment will be guided by the assigned Incident Management Team and NWCG Guidelines
 - 1) Ensure immediate coordination with the assigned division, safety officer or medical unit leader
 - 2) The STEN will ensure that all exposure procedures are followed
 - 3) Refer to NWCG Guidelines for Testing and Isolation listed below
- C. Returning from Deployment
 - 1. Logistics
 - a. During Demobilization
 - 1) Consumable items used from kits should be resupplied on the incident
 - a) If supplies are not available, document consumed items on a 213 form
 - b. Upon return
 - 1) All agency resources should coordinate restocking, rehabilitation and decontamination of their kits
 - 2. Health and Safety
 - a. Upon demobilization from an incident, STEN will ensure coordination with individual agencies and ensure that all resources follow their agencies' return to duty procedures
 - b. Return to duty procedures are to be completed while returning from the incident and prior to disbanding the strike team
- D. Pandemic Strike Team Kit Inventory
 - 1. Strike Team Leader/Water Tender Kit
 - a. 1 duffel bag
 - 1) 2 camping kits, each camping kit contains:
 - a) 1 tent
 - b) 1 inflatable sleeping pad
 - c) 1 sleeping bag
 - 2) 1 box each M, L, XL medical aid gloves
 - 3) 1 bag antiseptic cleaning towels (for personal use)
 - c. box/ammo can
 - 1) 2 infectious disease barrier kits, each kit contains:
 - a) 1 paper mask
 - b) 1 cloth mask
 - c) 1 small trash bag
 - d) 1 face shield

- e) 1 gown
 - f) 2 laminated COVID protocol cards
 - 2) 1-quart disinfectant bottle with spray head (for daily apparatus decontamination)
 - 3) 1 18-ounce hand sanitizer
 - 4) 1 thermometer (1 per STEN/trainee) (infrared)
 - 5) 2 cases meals ready to eat, or similar (3-day supply)
 - 6) 3 cases water (3-day supply)
3. Strike Team (type 1 or 3) Kit
- a. 1 duffel bag
 - 1) 4 camping kits, each kit contains:
 - a) 1 tent
 - b) 1 inflatable sleeping pad
 - c) 1 sleeping bag
 - 2) 1 box each M, L, XL medical aid gloves
 - 3) 1 bag antiseptic cleaning towels (for personal use)
 - b. 1 box/ammo can
 - 1) 4 infectious disease barrier kits, each kit contains:
 - a) 1 paper mask
 - b) cloth mask
 - c) small trash bag
 - d) face shield
 - e) gown
 - f) laminated COVID protocol cards
 - 2) 1-quart disinfectant bottle with spray head (for daily apparatus disinfectant)
 - 3) 18-ounce hand sanitizer
 - 4) 1 thermometer (infrared, 1 per strike team)
 - 5) 3 cases of meals ready to eat, or similar (3-day supply)
 - 6) 6 cases of water (3-day supply)

E. NWCG Guidelines for Testing and Isolation

- 1. Symptom Monitoring
 - a. Monitor the temperature of all personnel and watch for symptoms (fever is the most commonly presented). Ensure touchless infrared thermometers are available for use.
 - b. Implement *Wildland Fire COVID-19 Screening* (Appendix C) when entering on duty at the home unit or arrival at the incident.
 - c. If screening yields a positive result (positive screening), those individuals should be removed from work and tested as soon as possible. If testing shows positive, those individuals should be released from the assignment until they meet the return-to-work criteria, as described by CDC. Refer to the following sections on Testing and Positive Infection for further details.
 - d. Individuals who test negative were probably not infected at the time the sample was collected and can return to work, although a negative test result does not rule out getting sick at a later date.
 - e. If an individual who is part of an established module screens positive, the entire module should be tested as soon as possible. The same process for removal or return to work applies for the module for negative or positive results.
 - f. Prior to release and return to home, positive screenings should be isolated

in a separate location. This may require separate, dedicated, and staffed areas/facilities to ensure that individuals with potential COVID-19 infection do not comingle with other fire personnel.

- g. Next steps, including testing, should be coordinated with unit leadership, the medical unit, and/or local health authority.
 - h. Use appropriate PPE and social distancing protocols when entering the environment or in the presence of symptomatic personnel or positive screenings.
2. Testing
- a. Use approved and recommended testing procedures and guidelines
 - b. If testing is available, ensure personnel are tested as soon as symptoms appear
3. Positive Infection
- a. Isolate and evacuate to a pre-determined site or hospitalize (as conditions warrant).
 - b. Require appropriate PPE for all interaction with infected individuals. Except in the case of specially trained medical/decontamination personnel, employee contact with known infection should be limited to only absolutely necessary instances.
 - c. Transport of infected individuals should be via qualified EMS personnel or fire personnel in full PPE recommended for protection from COVID-19 by federal, state, and local health authorities.
 - d. Notify immediate supervisor of the situation.
 - e. Review contact log and follow-up appropriately (e.g., contact tracing).
 - f. Review wildfire smoke exposure leading up to symptoms.
 - g. Follow local agency and cooperator guidelines for notification procedures.
 - h. Consider using a text alert system to notify personnel who have had possible contact with an infected person.
 - i. Decontaminate equipment, including vehicles, used by infected individuals. Recognize that proper PPE use for COVID-19 decontamination requires training by an experienced instructor.
 - j. Options for contaminate facilities include:
 - 1) Time: close affected facility for 7 days to allow any virus to attenuate naturally
 - 2) Use of qualified contractor to clean facility
 - 3) Use of a pre-identified specially training team of local agency personnel to decontaminate facility