



COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions for Law Enforcement

Updated 07/23/2020

How can law enforcement personnel reduce their risk of COVID-19 exposure?

When feasible, law enforcement personnel should maintain a six-foot separation from others.

Law enforcement should practice proper hand hygiene by washing their hands for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available and illicit drugs are NOT suspected to be present, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Law enforcement should ensure only trained personnel wearing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) have contact with individuals who have or may have COVID-19.

When should Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) be used?

If feasible, law enforcement personnel should ask persons they are interacting with whether they are sick with fever or respiratory illness (i.e., cough, difficulty breathing). If the person says they have been sick or is visibly ill (sneezing and coughing), law enforcement personnel should wear a surgical/procedure mask, eye protection, disposable isolation gown, and gloves before having prolonged close (less than 6 feet) interactions or direct contact.

If law enforcement are unable to wear a disposable gown because it limits access to duty belt and gear, ensure duty belt and gear are disinfected after contact with individual.

Should law enforcement agencies screen personnel for signs and symptoms of COVID-19?

Law enforcement agencies should encourage all personnel to self-monitor for symptoms before they come to work. Workers who have symptoms (fever, cough, or shortness of breath) should notify their supervisor and stay home. Law enforcement agencies should ensure that sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance.

Should law enforcement take any special steps to clean vehicles?

Routine cleaning is appropriate. For soft (porous) surfaces, remove visible contamination if present and clean with appropriate cleaners indicated for use on these surfaces.

Should law enforcement take any special steps to clean equipment?

Clean and disinfect duty belt and gear before reuse using a household cleaning spray or wipe, according to the product label. Follow standard operating procedures for the containment and disposal of used PPE. Follow standard operating procedures for containing and laundering clothes, avoid shaking the clothes and launder items using the warmest appropriate water setting for the items and dry items completely. For agencies that provide laundry services for uniforms, this can help minimize the potential of transmitting the virus that causes COVID-19 and other potential take-home exposures.

When does public health consider law enforcement to be exposed to COVID-19?

Law enforcement personnel are considered exposed to COVID-19 in the following situations:

- Taken a cruise anywhere in the world in the last 14 days
- Traveled internationally for business or vacation in the last 14 days
- Live with someone who has symptoms of COVID-19 or has tested positive for COVID-19
- Provided care for a patient with symptoms of COVID-19 or has tested positive for COVID-19 without using proper PPE
- Had close contact (within 6 feet for 15 minutes or more) with a confirmed case of COVID-19 or a suspected case (a person who is visibly sick with respiratory symptoms (i.e., sneezing, coughing) or says they are sick with fever or respiratory symptom).

What should law enforcement personnel do if they are exposed to COVID-19?

It can take up to 14 days for someone who is exposed to COVID-19 to develop illness. The recommendation is that law enforcement stay home and away from others for 14 days after their last contact with a person that has COVID-19. However, law enforcement personnel are considered Critical Infrastructure Workers and may continue to go to work as long as they remain asymptomatic, wear a mask, and monitor their temperature at the beginning and end of their shift for the 14 day time frame after exposure. When exposed law enforcement personnel are not working, they should stay at home and maintain a six-foot distance from other people and animals living in the home.

If law enforcement personnel become symptomatic at any point during their shift, they should be sent home immediately to self-isolate. If they need healthcare, they should first call and notify their healthcare provider that they are a law enforcement officer (and a Critical Infrastructure Worker) who may have been exposed to COVID-19. The healthcare provider can assess whether they need to be examined in the office or if they can recover at home.

What should law enforcement do if they are sick?

Law enforcement personnel who are ill with fever or respiratory symptoms (like cough or difficulty breathing) should stay home and isolate from other people and animals in the house until:

- They have had no fever for at least 24 hours (without the use medicine that reduces fevers) AND
- Their other symptoms have improved (for example, when cough or shortness of breath have improved) AND
- At least 10 days have passed since the symptoms first appeared

Are there additional precautions law enforcement should take during death investigations?

Upon entering a structure (home or place of business) where someone has died and COVID-19 is a suspected cause or contributing factor, law enforcement personnel should anticipate that others in that building could also be infected. If the cause of death is unknown, it would be most protective to assume that COVID-19 contributed. Law enforcement personnel should limit the number of personnel needed to enter the building, if feasible. If the building has not been cleared, law enforcement personnel should wear a surgical/procedure mask, eye protection, disposable isolation gown, and gloves.

If the building has been cleared, then it may not be necessary to wear respiratory and eye protection, unless there are other hazards present that dictate their use according to an onsite hazard/risk assessment.

Law enforcement should avoid direct contact with someone who has died of suspected or confirmed COVID-19.