



Resources for the Kansas Fire Service on COVID 19

March 16, 2020

Good day, Kansas Fire Service. This letter is a joint collaboration between the Kansas State Fire Chiefs Association, Kansas State Firefighters Association, Kansas State Council of Firefighters, and the Office of the State Fire Marshal.

Many of the members of the Kansas fire service have been reaching out to our various organizations with question on handling our COVID 19 responses, protecting our communities, and most importantly, protecting our personnel. We would like to point out a few resources that are available to you as the local fire or Emergency Medical Service responders to assist with some guidance. No one preventative solution is correct for all communities, with the exception of the following three things:

- 1) Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- 2) Cover your cough or sneeze in your elbow if possible.
- 3) Avoid touching your face.

More direct facts that are updated daily can be found at <http://www.kdheks.gov/coronavirus/>. The same page above contains resources that are specific to healthcare workers, as well as responders.

One of the best resources for you is your local health agency. Reach out to them if you have not already done so and discuss their recommended actions for dealing with patients who exhibit symptoms and other best practices. They will have more specific actions that may be needed based on your local community needs and demographics.

The other side of this whole matter is how to deal with requests for public events, scheduled gatherings, responding to non-medical calls, and dealing with staff shortages due to illness or other family needs during this time. Many of our organizations at the national level have developed resources to assist local departments in making decisions on these issues.

It is important to understand that the Fire Service, as a whole, is part of the critical infrastructure necessary in any community. No one else is going to handle the emergencies if the fire department is not there. During these times, departments must think in those terms to decide what is in the best interest of its customers and how to provide adequate protection for them. Sometimes, temporary inconveniences must be endured to deliver important services adequately.

Dedicated to the Safety and Education of the Kansas Firefighter

Cancellation of public events, station tours, and sharing of your facility with public groups must be considered as options to help limit the community spread of this virus. Many communities feel that they are too small to worry about these matters. But look around, and see how many of your community members or even your staff interact with folks in other communities, counties, and states on a weekly or daily basis. How many of you deal with the travelling public in your community? Do you really know where these folks have been in the last ten to fourteen days and who they have interacted with while gone? All of these things should be considered. The risk does not need to be in your community.

Finally, we must make good plans for predicament if our folks become ill or unable to respond to calls or report to work. A good resource to assist you with this is your local Emergency Manager. They can assist with developing a Continuity of Operations Plan. How do you deal with a staffing shortage? It may require some creative thinking. You may have to develop alternate plans for childcare during times of schools or daycares closures to allow responders to be available for call. What are your truly limited staffing numbers if a career department? Is there alternate funding to backfill fire station or EMS shift coverages? Altering how you respond to calls may come in to play. Screening of callers at your dispatch center is the first step, if it is not already in place. Working in conjunction with your local EMS transport service and Hospital staff to develop alternate care delivery may be helpful.

First Responders are known for their ability to problem solve. This scenario is a true test of that ability. Our communities expect the best from us on their worst days. Now, we are being challenged to find a way to deliver that best during some of our toughest days. As a community of responders, we will make that happen without a doubt. Please use this event as an opportunity to learn. Review your procedures, develop new relationships with other organizations, and most importantly, communicate. Communicate with your staff, as well as your community about what your abilities are and what they can expect from your agency during times of potential limited responses. As a Fire Service group, we will all get through this and come out the other side better educated and with new plans that will help our communities be better than ever.

Here is a list of electronic resources to assist you in decision making and giving your staff and public correct and timely information. Always defer to what your local Health officials recommend.

KDHE COVID 19 Resource page: <http://www.kdheks.gov/coronavirus>

NVFC page: <https://www.nvfc.org/coronavirus-19-information-and-resources-for-ems/>

IAFC: <https://www.iafc.org/topics-and-tools/resources/resource/coronavirus-resources-for-fire-chiefs>

IAFF: <https://www.iaff.org/coronavirus/>

CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov>

Do not forget you can always reach out to us as your fire service representatives:

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| State Fire Marshal Doug Jorgensen | 785-296-3401 | doug.jorgensen@ks.gov |
| KSAFC President Tim Smith | 913-845-3801 | chief1860@ttrfd.com |
| KSFFA President Kevin Flory | 785-230-2307 | ksffaprez@gmail.com |
| KSCFF President Robert Wing | 913-788-8839 | rwing@iaff64.org |