



FEMA

US&R GENERAL MEMORANDUM – 2020-031

March 13, 2020

FOR: National Urban Search & Rescue Response System
Task Force Representatives

FROM: Fred Endrikat, Chief
Urban Search and Rescue Branch

SUBJECT: US&R General Memorandum 2020-031 – COVID-19 Administrative Guidance

As a follow-up to General Memorandum 2020-029 (COVID-19 Operational Update) issued on March 6, 2019, the purpose of this General Memorandum is to provide definitive administrative guidance regarding actions to be taken concerning the National US&R Response System (the System).

Bottom Line Up Front:

Effective immediately, all national-level System meetings and training activities scheduled between now and May 31st are cancelled / postponed (see “Leader’s Intent” below for additional information).

Background

As discussed in General Memorandum 2020-029, late in December 2019, Chinese authorities announced a possible epidemic of viral pneumonia of unknown etiology centralized on a local seafood market in Wuhan, China. The virus was identified as a novel coronavirus, now named “SARS-CoV2.” The disease it causes is called “COVID-19.”

Current Situation

There are currently no medications or vaccines for the COVID-19 virus. The only tools we have to control spread are time-tested public health measures such as isolation, quarantine, and social distancing.

Regarding domestic travel, health actions are typically initiated in the US by State-Local-Tribal and Territorial (SLTT) authorities. Currently, many Federal agencies have also initiated certain travel restrictions and adjustments to normally required workplace locations and assignments.

Broader non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) such as school closures and social distancing are similarly determined at the SLTT level. Currently, many Federal agencies have also initiated certain NPIs.



Leader's Intent – Administrative Actions for the National US&R System:

The System's primary concern continues to be our ability to continue to be able to perform our mission. The most significant consideration in this regard is personnel staffing.

After discussions with FEMA senior leadership (the Operations Division Director) and Dr. Anthony Macintyre, FEMA's Chief Medical Officer (and long-tenured member of our Virginia Task Force One), US&R Branch leadership conducted a teleconference with the US&R Strategic Group, the three Divisional Task Force Representatives, and the Incident Support Team Representative during the evening of March 12th. Based on consensus discussion, the following actions will be taken:

- Effective immediately, all national-level System activities between now and May 31st to include, but not limited to, the following events are cancelled / postponed.
 - March 17-19 IST Continuing Education Workshop
 - March 25 US&R Strategic Group Meeting
 - April 1-2 Water Operations Workshop
 - April 4-5 Canine Evaluation (CA-TF6)
 - April 4-5 StS Central Division Workshop (AZ-TF1)
 - April 20-25 Communications Spec ILT (MA-TF1)
 - April 21-22 National TFR Meeting
 - April 22-23 Training/Grant Workshops
 - May 3-4 IST Cache-Leveling Meeting
 - May 4-5 HazMat/HEPP Meeting
 - May 5 Advisory Group Meeting
 - May 6-7 Annual Advisory Organization Meetings
 - May 8 Equipment SubGroup Meeting
 - May 14-16 Canine Search Specialist Course (TN-TF1)
 - May 19-21 Safety Officer Course (CO-TF1)

- Status of Sanctioned and/or locally delivered courses, meetings, and activities will be solely at the discretion of individual Sponsoring Agencies.

- The US&R Branch stands by to assist Sponsoring Agencies in attempting to resolve any potential fiscal impacts caused by the above cancellations / postponements.

Actions and Considerations:

- The first priority as always is to follow Sponsoring Agency COVID-19 protocols and requirements.
- Each Task Force (TF) should consider convening a committee to evaluate and prepare for US&R deployments / operations to address the administrative (day-to-day) and operational challenges in a COVID-19 / pandemic environment. Potential representation on the committee would be from TF Program Management, Medical, Hazmat, Operations, Logistics, and Safety functional areas.

- Routinely provide information to TF members with the goal of easing fears and promoting preparation / readiness. Please contact the US&R Branch if there is a need for use of the FEMA Conference System to conduct teleconference.
- The FEMA Chief Medical Officer has confirmed that current US&R PPE supplies are above and beyond the requirements to handle any COVID-19 patients (to include our decontamination supplies).
- Each TF should complete an immediate inventory of the following:
 - N-95 Face Masks (including sizes)
 - North Half Masks
 - Respiratory cartridges for the North and Full-Face Masks to include all expiration dates
 - Follow current CDC / FDA advise for use of expired respiratory PPE in Pandemic environments (see link below)
 - Medical aid gloves (example: nitrile)
 - Tyvek, Saranex suits or equivalent
 - Identified Decon products for personnel decontamination
 - What PPE would the Sponsoring Agency be able to provide (if any) if deployed?
 - Protection / Re-inventory Plan for the PPE listed above to maintain security (make sure that it is secured and locked down).
 - TFs that house the Hazmat Equipment Push Packages (HEPP)s and the Incident Support Team (IST) Caches should also inventory the assigned PPE to include incorporating a plan to maintain security provisions.
- TF program management should consider discussing deployment availability during Pandemic environments with their associated Sponsoring/Participating Agencies.
- Ensure notification procedures for members that are sick or have associated signs and symptoms include their TF Program Office. Finalize TF-level guidance for consideration on determining if they are still considered deployable by Task Force Doctors / Medical.
- Develop and maintain up to date Rosters of available personnel for Notice and No-notice Deployments.
- Report any changes in TF status to the US&R Branch when / if a team status changes (as is currently practiced).
- Develop medical planning for pre-screening upon deployments to minimize exposure of personnel during Mobilization in case a member going through in-processing exhibits any COVID-19 related signs / symptoms.
- Develop Convoy plans to ensure that the proper amount and type of PPE is available for members (i.e., hand sanitizer) to include the possibility of the need to isolate any members that get sick or start to show signs during transportation.
- Consider CISD / CISM preparations for deployed personnel (to include their families).
- Consider TF Program Office and Command & General Staff meetings for individual task force planning in pandemic environments.
- Ensure that all US&R team members take the opportunity to review ANNEX B Concept of Operations US&R Operations in a Contaminated Environment (US&R Hazmat Operations).

See below for COVID-19 Resources / Information:

CDC Dashboard: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-in-us.html>

John Hopkins University Dashboard:

<https://www.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/bda7594740fd40299423467b48e9ecf6>

CDC COVID-19: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/index.html>

CDC COVID-19 - What to do if you're sick: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/steps-when-sick.html>

FDA Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for PPE for COVID-19:

<https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/emergency-situations-medical-devices/emergency-use-authorizations#covid19ppe>

CDC Respirators Beyond the Manufactured Shelf-life: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/release-stockpiled-N95.html>

Posted Updated guidance regarding managing exposed Healthcare Personnel (HCP):

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-risk-assesment-hcp.html>

Posted Updated Interim Clinical Guidance for Management of Patients with Confirmed

Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) disease: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/infectioncontrol/controlrecommendations.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fhcp%2Fin

We will continue to monitor the situation on a daily basis. Any changes to this posture will be communicated as soon as possible. Questions regarding this correspondence should be sent to Buddy Ey at elwood.ey-iii@fema.dhs.gov.

cc:

US&R Strategic Group

US&R Advisory Group

US&R Branch Staff

Regional/International ESF #9 Representatives