



Infectious Disease Pandemic Best Management Practices

Created in response to COVID-19 Pandemic on 4/23/2020

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide best management practices for South Dakota Wildland Fire Division (SDWF) employees for daily work and initial attack (IA) fire response on local incidents during an infectious disease pandemic. If responding to incidents in other geographic areas, SDWF employees should follow the applicable response plan for that geographic area and jurisdictional agency. This document will be updated as new information related to the infectious disease pandemic becomes available.

During the current COVID-19 pandemic, SDWF employees should follow the COVID-19 Pandemic Wildland Fire Response Plan for the Rocky Mountain Geographic Area when responding to incidents within the Rocky Mountain Geographic Area.

Before Coming to Work During the COVID-19 Pandemic

All employees should be checked prior to entering facilities at beginning of shift

Today or in the past 24 hours, have you had any of the following symptoms?

1. Fever, felt feverish, or had chills? Repeated shaking with chills? Every employee will have their temperature checked daily before entering the facility. A fever is considered a temperature of 100.4 and above.
2. Cough? Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing?
3. Muscle pain? Headache? Sore throat?
4. New loss of taste and/or smell?
5. In the past 14 days, have you had contact with a person known to be infected with the coronavirus (COVID-19)?
6. Do I have any underlying health or other issues that may place me in a high-risk category?

Refer to the Infectious Disease Screening Tool at the end of this document for directions for daily screening.

Daily Best Practices

- Practice social distancing
 - Avoid physical contact with co-workers and the public; maintain a 6' spacing.
 - Assign vehicles to firefighters and avoid cross-over of employees and belongings.
 - Discourage shared use of phones, radios, or other work tools and equipment.
 - Conduct group meetings virtually (such as zoom/teleconference/etc.) or maintain a 6' spacing
 - Limit access to facilities for all non-fire personnel.
 - Personnel should keep a log of close contact and submit to supervisors daily.
 - Each individual is responsible for protecting themselves and their crew from exposure when off duty.
- Face Coverings
 - SDWF recommends that employees use cloth face coverings in public settings, where social distancing measures are difficult to maintain, especially in areas of significant community-based transmission.
 - Maintain face coverings in a sanitary manner. Face coverings should not be distracting or offensive to others.
 - Face coverings should fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face, be secured with ties or ear loops, include multiple layers of fabric, allow for breathing without restriction, and be able to be laundered and machine dried without damage or change to shape.
- Practice personal hygiene
 - Wash hands frequently for at least 20 seconds, with soap, after coughing or sneezing, when hands are visibly dirty, or after touching common surfaces (doorknobs, desktops, etc.).
 - Provide handwashing stations near frequently entered facilities.

- Use hand sanitizer when getting in and out of vehicles and after fueling.
 - Do not touch eyes, nose, mouth with gloved or unwashed hands. Cover nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing. If using a tissue, immediately dispose the tissue and wash or sanitize hands.
- PPE launder regularly
 - Wear clean clothing/PPE every day when not on assignment.
 - Wipe down all non-laundered apparel (shoes, wristwatches, jewelry, etc.), with disinfectant.
 - Workplace/equipment/cleaning procedures
 - Develop routine daily cleaning procedures for vehicles and other equipment.
 - Designate a trained employee to supervise daily cleaning procedures.
 - Ventilate vehicles during and after transport.
 - Clean all “high-touch” surfaces every day.
 - Avoid contact with bodily fluids when cleaning. Use EPA approved cleaning supplies.
 - Use disposable paper towels and approved cleaning solution, or wipes for cleaning; Wipes – not sprays – are recommended to avoid aerosolizing the virus on contact.
 - Thoroughly wet surfaces with cleaning solution and air dry; do not actively dry surfaces.
 - Wash hands thoroughly after cleaning equipment, surfaces, etc.
 - Work under the “Module as One” concept
 - Minimize exposure by not mixing personnel, e.g., same personnel assigned together for entire season, on same schedule, to same vehicle, on same assignments, in same camp, etc.

Initial Attack Response

- Follow Best Daily Practices.
- Stock vehicles with disinfecting wipes, hand sanitizers, and soap.
- Don’t share PPE, flight helmets, radios, gloves etc.
- Maintain personal hygiene throughout the operational period. Allow time for washing and sanitation.
- Limit IA briefings to key overhead personnel.
- Include infectious disease pandemic mitigation in briefings and safety messages.
- Weigh the risk of responding in multiple vehicles.
- Maintain high level of crew self-sufficiency.
- During tactical operations, maintain separation from other resources as much as possible. Maintain personal spacing within crew. Avoid sharing tools, water, radios, etc. Rely on electronic communication in place of face to face with overhead and adjacent resources.
- Consider increased use of aircraft and heavy equipment to keep fires small and minimize numbers of responding personnel.
- Consider a full spectrum of strategic response options ranging from allowing remote fires to burn based on values to be protected and higher priority wildland fires to rapid suppression during IA to limit fire sizes.
- Ensure that all cooperators and contractors understand the respective jurisdictional agency’s infectious disease pandemic wildfire response protocols.

Type 3 Incident Management Response

- General Suggestions
 - Follow daily best practices.
 - Emphasize containment and evaluate mop-up standards on all incidents to minimize additional fire spread efficiently. Limit length of assignment and number of responders needed to meet objectives.
 - Consider zone and point protection suppression strategies associated with protection of human life, communities, and critical infrastructure when sufficient resources for perimeter control are not available.

- Use MREs, freeze dried, single-serve sack, or boxed meals instead of food lines. Evaluate drinking water supply options to minimize exposure and handling of water containers.
 - Monitor smoke and Co2 exposure to firefighters, rotate in and out of smoke if necessary.
 - Consider shorter tours (<14 days) and shorter shift lengths. Allow time in shifts to provide for personal hygiene, sanitizing equipment and vehicles, and additional rest.
- Command Staff
- Prevent community spread within the camp - consider objectives that lead to success while safely utilizing the minimum number of personnel. Utilize technology for communication whenever possible.
 - Avoid community gatherings – share public information electronically or telephonically.
 - Establish separate medical facilities to protect personnel injured on an incident from personnel that potentially have infectious disease.
- Operations Section
- Plan for smaller remote spike camps to limit exposure to non-operational personnel.
- Logistics Section
- Plan for extra staff to help pull & set-up team trailers. Utilize drivers, if possible, during incident operations.
 - Plan to support multiple smaller spike style camps vs. one large base camp/incident command post (ICP).
 - Plan accordingly to limit exposure by subordinates.
 - Utilize technology when possible for documentation, communication, etc.
 - Have a contingency plan if wireless/cellular signal does not support virtual/remote access.
 - Develop a sustainable cleaning/sanitization plan.
- Finance Section
- Evaluate what positions can function remotely or virtually.
 - Consider utilizing documents electronically to limit staff exposure.
- Plans Section
- Determine the support positions that can function remotely or virtually.
 - Consider using technology to hold operational briefings.
 - Limit meeting attendees to only those that need to be there while enforcing social distancing.
 - Plan for storage of large amounts of electronic/digital files.
 - Distribute Incident Action Plans electronically when possible.

Large Fire Response

- Follow daily best practices.
- Employees are aware that there are greater risks of infection when accepting an incident assignment during an infectious disease pandemic. Employees are responsible for considering and preparing for the potential risk to their family when they return. With this understanding, employees that make themselves available for assignments are expected to be available to accept an assignment. Be prepared.
- Employees are expected to accept the standards of the jurisdictional agency or hiring agency. However, if an employee feels unsafe in their work environment refer to IRPG page 19 on *How to Properly Refuse Risk*.
- Incoming resources to South Dakota will not be required to self-quarantine prior to coming into the state.
- When returning from an assignment employee will not be required to self-quarantine, unless they show symptoms.

Wildland Fire Infectious Disease Screening Tool

INSTRUCTIONS FOR SCREENING

- If resource is positive for any symptoms prior to mobilization, DO NOT MOBILIZE.
- Screen resources at entrances to incident facilities– (Determine the adequate number of personnel needed for screening at each facility. Although medical personnel are ideal, screeners do not have to be medically trained.)
- If resource is positive for any symptoms including fever (over 100.4) at facility entrance, DO NOT ANNOUNCE- ask to step aside.
- Escort any resource identified as infected to isolation area.
- Isolation support personnel should begin documentation. Have infected resource contact their supervisor for further direction.
- Isolation support personnel should protect and secure any collected personal identifiable information or personal health information.
- Notify local public health officials.
- Have infected resource transported as appropriate.