

Dispatch Guidance

Going forward, we are recommending that the following screening questions be asked to All Callers until further notice:

1. Have you had any recent signs or symptoms of a viral infection including fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, body aches, or difficulty breathing?
2. In the 14-days prior to the onset of your symptoms, have you had close contact with anyone with a suspicion or confirmation of infection with coronavirus?
3. In the 14-days prior to the onset of your symptoms, have you been in any locations, including countries (Italy, Germany, Spain, France, Iran, Japan, South Korea, or China), cruise ships, communities, or public gatherings where there is reported active transmission of coronavirus?

These questions accomplish a couple of items. First, they identify patients who are able to volunteer and potentially important travel and exposure history. Second, as community spread becomes more prevalent and we are unable to use travel history as a screening criterion, it will allow for early identification of patients with viral illness regardless of what their chief complaint reported to the dispatcher may be (e.g. chest pain).

Crews and dispatchers need to maintain familiarity with the transmission characteristics in the communities that they operate within and react to this information accordingly. For instance, active transmission is occurring in Montgomery County, MD, where several Navy Fire & ES crews are located. Those crews should likely approach a PUI cautiously and / or in full PPE. Conversely, isolated cases have been reported in northern Maine, so positive screening to fever + respiratory symptoms may not require a response in full PPE for personnel in Cutler, ME.

If a patient screens positive, the dispatcher should relay this information to the responding ambulance crews using the term "PUI". The crews should proceed to don appropriate PPE in preparation for patient contact.