



## Best Practice Methods during Coronavirus

All of us in public safety are scrambling to try to ensure our public safety brothers and sisters and their families are safe and that we are keeping the public safe in interactions with our staff. Even if we are in a 911 Center, we come into contact with non-staff personnel, such as vendors, visitors, family members, officers, etc.

There is no one size fits all approach to all 911 Centers. There are many different things that must be taken into consideration as they are so many variations to their environments, such as:

- Is your 911 Center a stand alone building that has more deliberate access control?
- Are you in a section of a Sheriff's Office or Police Department?
- Is there security in your building?
- How close are your stations?
- Is there a back-up center where rotation can be utilized with that center?

This document is to provide ideas of potential safeguards and processes. It also contains some question to prompt you to think if these items pertain to your agency and if so, how would you incorporate them.

First, we want to thank everyone who gave us their valuable input which we have received from different 911 Centers across this great United States of America, as being at the forefront is where the best learning always takes place. What you will find below is from our conversations with agencies, our reading of what 911 leaders are talking about online and by reviewing CDC guidelines, IACP documents, Health and Human Services guidelines and other medical reviews to help us try to present you with some helpful information.

Because there are so many variations of how you can protect your Center and Staff, we are presenting several sections below. They are as follows:

- Suggestions of ways you can protect your Center and Staff
- Thought provoking questions to aid you in your preparation for your 911 Center
- Continuity of operations - making sure you can operate under a staffing crisis
- Helpful links
- Check in process for entry into your Center

### **Suggestions of ways you can protect your Center and Staff**

- Use a disinfectant that sprays your center and replaces using all of the disinfectant wipes. We have included a couple of flyers from a company that offers this and it is available in many stores.
- Assign keyboards and mice to individuals so they are only using the ones they touch
- Disinfecting workstations, door handles, time clocks, etc. before/after each shift
- Restricting the 911 Center to ONLY staff and/or janitorial staff
  - If janitorial staff is allowed, our suggestion is to get a written agreement with the janitorial agency on precautions they must take before entering your center
  - We have heard of many agencies cancelling this service. We have heard of a few doubling their activity
  - Unless absolutely essential, administrative staff work from home
- Ensure what staff is bringing to work is not shared with other family members – iPad, backpack, etc.
- Call your vendors for CAD, CPE, Radio to see if:
  - They have built any special functionality to deal with the Coronavirus
  - They have any success stories from agencies that are using their technology in a progressive



way to fight the Coronavirus

- If you need additional licenses, maybe to allow people to work from home, or for retirees to come in and train on the system
- Call your public safety consultant, that you work with, and find out if they have prepared any documentation or helped with any strategies that can assist your agency. Your consultant should be working with numerous 911 Centers and should have more of a larger picture vision of how this is being handled across the US.
- Stay on social media with videos to help people understand how to stay safe and comply with the law. People emulate our emotions so showing a calm demeanor and stating facts, not hysteria, can keep calls for service down by keeping the public calm.
- Take FEMS's [IS-520 Course](#) – "Introduction to Continuity of Operations Planning for Pandemic Influenzas"
- Set restrictions on dispatchers traveling out of state, especially by air travel:
  - Request they stay at home quarantine for 14 days and test for COVID-19
  - Check with your solicitor to ensure what you can mandate or what you must request
- Reduce number of dispatchers on duty per shift if they are very close, so you have space in between
- Have dispatchers work from separate consoles
- Have dispatchers rotate back and forth at back up centers
  - Clean stations when not in use
- If you are in an area where other non-dispatch personnel are in your building, be sure to post easy to see signs and rope off your dispatch area.
- Suspend any training or vacation
- Are you on a hosted system that allows some to call-take/dispatch from home for non-emergency?

### **Thought provoking questions to aid you in your preparation for your 911 Center**

- Have you met with your County Medical Director, if you have one or a medical expert you can partner with as your agency expert?
- Do you have a "COVID" Team that is dedicated to keeping up with current events so strategy meetings are more effective to discuss future changes and contingencies?
- Do you have this listed in your PSAP?
  - Steps to protect yourself to reduce the likelihood of contracting COVID-19
  - See list below – Exhibit A
- Are requiring any of the following as mandatory in your agency?
  - N95 masks or similar?
  - Gloves?
  - Face shields if visitors are in that are exceptions that are allowed (janitorial, vendor, etc)
- Should you limit what staff can bring into the center?
  - Carry out food, versus food made at home, where they know it was prepared in a safe way?
  - Beverages?
  - Convenient store items, where many people may touch items?
  - Item used by other family members – iPads, etc.?
  - These items may not be restricted, but are required to be disinfected before entering the center
- Is our agency gathering PPE in the event you need it?
- Do you have non-contact thermometers? They are getting harder to find and more expensive. Suggestion is to get one now.
- Have you gotten approval to have mandatory quarantine time not go against your employee's leave time?



## Continuity of Operations

To have continuity of operations is very specific for your agency size, call for service volume, who you dispatch to, etc. We are glad to help agencies create a plan for your agency if needed. Otherwise, hopefully, these ideas will help you navigate staff challenges as they arise.

- Reduce who you dispatch for, by suspending dispatch to non-public safety entities
- Do you have officers and firefighters who could do a fast track training to dispatch?
  - If you are not infected yet, you could start training them now.
- Are you training with reduced staff, while there is staff there in case training doesn't go well, to be prepared for what challenges that brings?
- Consider a tiered response due to loss of staff
  - This can be based on percentage reduction or actual number of staff absent
  - Closing/condensing/combining non-essential radio channels
  - Condensing/combining main/primary dispatch channels
- Are you on a hosted system where some can call take/dispatch from home?
- Shelter in Place AT work:
  - This is for centers in extreme cases on very low resource levels
  - A plan must be in place for existing staff to stay on site, considering:
    - Consult with your solicitor
    - Who will be those who will do this? Get a list of VOLUNTEERS.
      - Decide now, understanding they may get sick and have back up plans A, B, etc.
    - Availability of things such as:
      - Washing machine
      - Food
      - Water
      - Medicine
      - Toiletry items
      - Shower facilities
      - A week's worth of time
      - Air mattresses
      - Staff lockers – temporary if needed for security of personal effects
      - This list goes on and we can provide more if requested
- It is important to have plans in place with surrounding PSAPs if there are any. In states like Pennsylvania, there is only one PSAP per county. Many states have many PSAPs. Have a plan to consolidate services if needed. Train on this operation if you can find any time to do so. If not during this crisis, train for it after this crisis.
- Have you reached out to your retired and previously employed dispatch personnel in the area, even those who did not work at your center?
  - Obviously, those who previously worked there with your technology (Specific to your CAD, CPE, recording systems, radio) make training much less challenging.
- Training existing administrative staff to dispatch – GIS, administrative assistants, or anyone in your office that is currently not training AND capable.
  - This requires you put together a crash course on "How to Dispatch." This is surely that agencies can share on basic principles, while CAD, CPE, Radio will need to be trained specifically to your agency.
  - Don't discount police officers, firemen and EMS staff. Some have previous experience. Some are just willing to help.



## Helpful Links

This is a list of hopefully helpful links, which you can add to, so they are all listed in one place.

- Main [CDC](#) site to learn about how to protect yourself and what to do if you think you are sick
- APCO [Coronavirus Hub](#)
- NENA [Coronavirus Resources](#)
- FEMS's [IS-520 Course](#) – “Introduction to Continuity of Operations Planning for Pandemic Influenzas”
- International Association of Chiefs of Police – [COVID-19: Staying Healthy as a Police Officer](#)
- [Recommended Guidance for Extended Use and Limited Reuse of N95 Filtering Facepiece Respirators](#)
- [FEMA](#) – Guidance for EMS and PSAPs regarding Coronavirus

## Check in Process

Entry into your 911 Center is a key to protecting your Staff, their family and your Center. We have created a simple spreadsheet to assist you with documenting your efforts to protect your center, while treating everyone the exact same. We did this as we have found many centers have zero access control and are finding sick people once they are IN their center exposed to others. We need to ensure we are protecting our people from co-workers who may inadvertently expose themselves to others.

Many people are going to come to work with symptoms that are not due to the coronavirus, so they won't volunteer that they have these symptoms. They believe they are just fine. However, though they may not be infected with the virus, it should be leadership making the call that they are safe to come to work. It shows that you are doing your due diligence to protect all employees and promote a safe work environment. It is responsible and it is needed.

This sign in sheet is just something you can use, edit for your agency or make your own one that fits your practices better. The point being that it can be used as a daily record that you checked your team and they were ok. If an employee is not ok, it shows you did not single any individual out, but checked every individual, treating everyone the same. You are also treating everyone fairly and for their protection. Their **symptoms** stood out enough to get your attention and cause you to take them off the schedule.

The sheet is to be filled out electronically as you screen staff. There are cells that will highlight. Currently if any of the “Emergency Warning Signs” are answered yes, those cells highlight. Also, if a temperature is taken and it is over 99.99 degrees, it is highlighted.

We are glad to adjust this sheet to help anyone. Just let us know if you would like it.

Also, the next page is an example of how this is being done in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. They have instituted a great approach, which they



## **Allegheny County 911**

Moon Township, PA

Lastly, we are going to present the steps that we found at Allegheny County 911 in Pennsylvania in regard to allowing their staff to enter the building. I have been to this agency quite a few times and they have a remarkable staff. Gary Thomas, Chuck Perry, Chuck Bettenelli and Paul Colberg are all key parts of this operation and they are a team that has always proven to be very prepared, have many layers of redundancy in their operational planning and always seem prepared. I want to thank them for sharing this information with me **and** allowing me to share it with you guys.

### **A few notes about the Allegheny County 911 Center to put their process in context:**

- It is the only PSAP in the County
- They dispatch to:
  - 89 police departments, including Pittsburgh PD
  - Sheriff's Office, Airport Police, County Police
  - 63 EMS Agencies
  - Approximately 200 Fire Agencies, which are mostly volunteer
- They have the following positions:
  - 89 Positions of active CAD
  - 63 positions in their backup center
  - They have approximately 20 other positions in various other agencies and the mobile command post
- They recently moved into a new larger 911 Center
- They have approximately 250 employees including dispatchers, call takers and administrative staff

***The next page is the outline of what they provided for their employees for entry into the PSAP.***



Beginning Monday, March 23, 2020, at 13:00 hours ALL visitors needing entrance to the 911 location will be screened.

**Employees:**

- You must arrive 30 minutes prior to your shift to allow for processing. Attempt to punch in ASAP, all overtime will be honored. I am allowing all 701's and 1301's access to the APP. If you have installed it on your phone, you can punch in via the APP, from your car when you arrive.
- When coming up the driveway, you will make a left and proceed to the tent. Remain in your vehicle during screening. You will be asked a few questions and will have your temperature checked using a temporal thermometer. Temperature's over 100.4 will be turned away.
- If you are permitted through, you will be given a small sticker for entry into the building. This sticker must be applied to your access card each day. You must enter through the west entry, 911 entrance.
- For those not meeting the criteria, you will be turned away. The medical tech will contact the Shift Commander via radio or phone to report this. Staffing will be evaluated prior to last minute mandates.
  - That employee must remain home off for 7 days or 3 days fever free whichever is greater. That employee should also contact their PCP to arrange for testing. Said employee needs a return to work from a Dr. to be able to return.

**Visitors:**

- All visitors, deliveries, contractors, etc. will also be screened. Those needing access to the building will go through the same process as above and will be given a visitor's badge to display on them while in the building. This is the indicator that they have passed the screening. All visitors will need to enter through the West entry, 911 entrance. The main entry to the building will be closed.
  - Those visitors that are denied access shall be turned away. If deliveries, the person shall leave the shipment with the medical tech. The tech will then advise via radio or phone that a delivery needs picked up from them.

**CLEANING:**

- Once Bactronix begins cleaning in the 911 center, you will no longer be able to use Clorox Wipes / Lysol. This product takes care of it all. DO NOT USE THEM. The Bactronix application needs 15 seconds to dry, then you may resume normal work. 911 Management will provide information on how this will occur.

Allegheny County 911 has a different set up than many of you, but I believe their process can offer a lot of great thoughts on how you can protect your Center and staff. There are many other policies they have, but I wanted to focus on the entry part of their security and offer suggestions on security for the inside of the PSAP below.



### We are in this fight together

Guys, we are praying for our nation and all of our first responders. We are here to help any way we can. Please let us know if we can assist your agency. We will give you our best. Most of our small company is public safety and we have a true passion to be in this fight with everyone to increase public safety for all of our loved ones.

I also want to thank those who we are collaborating with to help everyone else. We have spoken with agencies all across this country to get their ideas of how to help and they are the heroes.

Lastly, we are always humbled to be a part of public safety, which is a great group of men and women who give their all to protect others. We love our customers and love what we do. Know we are here for you always.

Sincerely,

**Buck Mims**

Chief Executive Officer

National Public Safety Group

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*Serving those who serve*



## Exhibit A

### **Steps to protect yourself to reduce the likelihood of contracting COVID-19**

- Practice proper hand hygiene by promptly washing or sanitizing hands after coughing, sneezing, or physically interacting with others. Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water.
- Avoid touching your face (eyes, nose, and mouth).
- Cover your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze. Make sure to dispose of the tissue immediately.1 Wash your hands with soap immediately after sneezing or coughing.
- Avoid close physical contact with others, including shaking hands and hugging.
- Maintain at least 6 feet distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing, when possible.
- Promptly disinfect your gear including your duty belt after physical contact with any individual.
- Keep disinfectant wipes and hand sanitizer in an easily accessible place while on-duty.
- Only wear a mask if coming into contact with someone who has the COVID-19 virus and make sure to know how to properly use and dispose of it.
- Educate yourself and participate in training on the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for respiratory protection, if available at your agency. Ensure only trained personnel wearing appropriate PPE have contact with individuals who have or may have COVID-19.
- Make sure to know your agency's plans and protocols for exposure control.
- Seek medical care early if you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing.

COVID-19-infected droplets may be able to live on nearly any surface. Consider sanitizing items you frequently touch during a shift:

- Phone
- Laptop
- Clipboard
- Patrol car equipment
  - Steering wheel
  - Gear shift
  - Dispatch radio module
  - Door handles and edges
- Have back up meals