

# Memorandum

**To:** All CAL FIRE Employees  
**Date:** March 3, 2020  
**Telephone:** (916) 653-7772  
**Website:** www.fire.ca.gov

**From:** THOM PORTER, Director  
**California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)**

**Subject:** Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

On February 27, State health officials and Governor Gavin Newsom provided a public briefing on the State's response to novel coronavirus, also known as COVID-19. They stressed that the health risk to the general public in California remains low at this time, and State and local health officials are actively engaged in preparation to keep Californians safe should the risk of infection to the general public increase.

The health and safety of Californians, including all State employees is the top priority. The State has dealt with many public health situations before and is responding appropriately. As you know, our Department has continuity of operations and continuity of government plans that can be implemented as necessary. The Governor stated that we do not want to overreact, nor underreact, to this issue. Here is the link if you would like to watch last Thursday's briefing <https://twitter.com/CAgovernor/status/1233098744045850624>.

In addition, to keep State employees safe and healthy, CalHR has provided direction that all State departments are to defer all mission critical and discretionary travel to China, South Korea, Italy, and Iran, per travel warnings issued by the U.S. State Department.

If an employee does become subject to quarantine or self-monitoring as issued from a local public health department, please make appropriate notifications through the supervisory chain, and Administrative Time Off and/or telework will be considered consistent with Department policy. CAL FIRE will follow guidance put forth from our Safety and Occupational Health and Wellness Programs, both of CAL FIRE's doctors, Dr. Brett Rosen (EMS Program) and Dr. Thomas Ferguson (Occupational Health and Wellness Program), as well as local and State public health departments to ensure the safety of our staff as the situation evolves.

## What You Should Do

- Stay informed by visiting the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website [here](#) and the California Department of Public Health website [here](#). Both websites are updated daily with the latest information and advice for the public.
- As with any virus, especially during the flu season, the California Department of Public Health reminds everyone there are a number of steps individuals can take to protect themselves and those around them:
  - Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
  - Avoid touching eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick to reduce the risk of infection with several different viruses.
- Stay away from work, school or other people if you become sick with respiratory symptoms like fever and cough.
- Get the flu shot.
- Specific to our emergency response personnel:
  - Review the recommended sequence for safely donning and doffing PPE.
  - Practice the appropriate use of PPE prior to caring for a patient, including attention to correct use of PPE and prevention of contamination of clothing, skin, and environment during the process of removing such equipment.
  - Ensure you are medically cleared, trained, and fit tested for respiratory protection device use (e.g., N95 filtering face piece respirators), or medically cleared and trained in the use of an alternative respiratory protection device (e.g., Powered Air-Purifying Respirator, PAPR) whenever respirators are required.
  - Ensure an adequate supply of PPE.
  - Ensure an adequate supply of or access to EPA-registered hospital grade disinfectants for adequate decontamination of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) transport vehicles and their contents.
  - Ensure that any EMS clinicians and biohazard cleaners contracted by CAL FIRE tasked with the decontamination process are educated, trained, and have practiced the process according to the manufacturer's recommendations.
- If you believe you were exposed to COVID-19, follow CAL FIRE's Ryan White Exposure procedures (HB 8100 PROCEDURE 803).
- If you feel sick with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, and have traveled internationally or were in close contact with someone with COVID-19 in the 14 days before you began to feel sick, seek medical care. Before you go to a doctor's office or emergency room, call ahead and tell them about your recent travel and your symptoms.

If you are contacted by your local public health department, please make sure to follow their guidance and advice closely in order to protect your health and the health of those around you.

- In response to this new virus, remember to be respectful, fair, and without bias in your interactions with all persons. Do not assume someone of a particular national origin, race, or background is more likely to have to have Novel Coronavirus.