

Operations Bulletin Coronavirus/ COVID 19 - Updated

April 29, 2020

Further to the Coronavirus/COVID 19 Operations Bulletin issued March 17th 2020, and the RCMSAR Standard Operating Procedures specific to COVID 19 issued March 13th 2020, RCMSAR HQ requires that our stations and volunteers adhere to the following updated items regarding COVID19 outlined below.

Travel, Training, and Special Events – Updated March 26, 2020

Given the uncertainty we face **the suspension of all non-essential travel, training, face to face meetings, special events or social events related to RCMSAR personnel will continue indefinitely.**

All RCMSAR face to face activities (including training), have been suspended until further notice with the exception of SAR Taskings by JRCC and EMBC, **essential** maintenance needed to keep the vessel operational (limited to minimum personnel needed), and fueling of vessels if needed after a SAR call.

If in doubt as to what is essential, talk to the Operations Manager or Director of Readiness.

Operations – Updated April 29, 2020

All personnel engaged in SAR operations are to follow the guidance previously provided as well as the following:

- Social distance needs to be practised by crews during all phases of a SAR op including pre-deployment and post-deployment events such as briefing, dressing, and checking/cleaning equipment;
- Carry only the number of crew required to execute the mission;
- Do not board another vessel or allow passengers on to yours unless you assess it is necessary to save a life. In that event, send across only the number of personnel needed to execute the task;
- If personnel are brought on to your vessel provide as much distance as possible between them and the crew;
- Wear gloves at all times **as appropriate for operations**, and properly remove/dispose of them when finished (the same as taught during FA). Proper hand washing should still be followed before and after glove use;
- **If gloves are not practical, consider consistent hand sanitizer use/cleaning during operations and station changes**



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- Make sure you have hand sanitizers onboard but if not then carry soap and fresh water. Wash hands frequently and wipe down equipment that was used

Use of Mask Guidance

Based on guidance from the BCCDC, we strongly encourage members to wear a mask if available and practical during operations where social distancing is not achievable. Wearing of masks, however, remains a personal choice and should not impede safe or effective operations. Masks are designed to help with protecting others from yourself and should not be used as a sole barrier/tactic to protect crews from exposure to COVID 19.

Pre-screening for COVID 19 and other SOPs must still be followed. If suspected COVID 19 symptoms or exposure, regardless of masks, direct a CCG asset to respond, unless it is deemed a life or death situation and remains at the discretion of the crew.

If potential exposure exists, N95 or KN95 masks, if available, must be used on patients with suspected COVID 19 symptoms, and by crews when managing a patient. Otherwise, wearing of surgical masks will suffice for both crew and patients to help mitigate potential virus transfer.

Some important steps to follow with mask use:

- Wash your hands before putting a mask, before taking a mask off, and again after mask disposal (for yourself or a patient)
- Follow the mask directions for proper fit and test based on the masks you have available at your station
- Do not reuse masks. Dispose of them in a trash receptacle lined with plastic after use.

BCDC link for more info on wearing of masks <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/prevention-risks/masks>

Any station personnel who believe they have been exposed to or have contracted COVID 19 must inform their station leaders, and station leaders to HQ. We need to be aware of any potential exposure from RCMSAR operations as well as confirmed cases within the organization. Any person exposed, exhibiting symptoms, or feeling ill in general are NOT to attend operational calls or other essential activities.

Risk Assessment – Updated March 26, 2020

At this point, RCMSAR is not issuing the directive to stand down all stations for SAR operations. Station Leaders and their teams are encouraged to discuss the situation in your region and in your station in order to decide what is in the best interest of the team.

However, you are all volunteers and while your contribution to the safety of others is important it is not the only criteria in this crisis. Individually, only you know the personal risk that COVID 19 may

present to you or your loved ones. It is strongly encouraged that all members self-assess their risk tolerance especially if you fall into one of the identified higher risk categories. **The final decision to remain active or respond to a call remains with you!**

Further information on people who are at higher risk of severe illness and potential COVID-19 complications can be found at the following link:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/people-at-higher-risk.html>

If the event that you need to stand down your station for COVID-19 exposure, follow routine protocols in place to notify JRCC and RCMSAR HQ.

Cleaning of Vessels and Equipment - Updated March 17, 2020

As always it is important to read your manufacturers manual first for recommendation on cleaning any equipment that may be damaged by harsh chemicals (like touch screens). To prevent the spread of potential germs, vessels and equipment should be wiped down after every use. The following elements should be applied during cleaning practices:

- wear disposable gloves
- use of disinfectant wipes/sprays, alcohol wipes (at least 70% alcohol), or 1:50 ratio bleach:water (5 tablespoons to 1 gallon water will offer approximately 1000ppm) to sanitize/clean equipment believed to have been exposed to COVID-19
 - try to avoid cleaning screen with anything containing bleach, ammonia, etc.
- bring all cleaning supplies needed with you at the beginning and work from one end of the vessel to the other
- dispose of gloves and used cleaning products in a plastic bag which can be sealed

If possible, each RCMSAR member should have their own PPE and helmet to help eliminate exposure, however, we are aware that some stations share equipment, and in this case please take extra precautions in cleaning/wiping down equipment and PPE after use.

Use of Communications Systems

If there has been a suspected exposure or confirmed case of COVID-19 within your station, and if you have a comms system installed on your vessel/helmets which are shared amongst crew, consider refraining from using the comms system, removing the comms system from the helmets temporarily, using disposable headset covers, or using regular helmets if required during operations. If you eliminate the use of your comms system on the vessel, and specifically on open vessels, additional risk analysis needs to be considered when completing your GAR.



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Hand Washing

In addition to the suggested personal care guidelines provided by the BC Centre for Disease Control <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19> RCMSAR personnel should also:

- wash their hands prior to touching/using any gear and equipment including the vessel
- wash their hands after finishing touching/using any gear and equipment including the vessel

Sincerely,

Amber Sheasgreen
Operations Manager
RCMSAR