

VPD COVID-19 SCENE & SUDDEN DEATH PROTOCOLS

1) OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to front-line members who are attending a sudden death call or any scene where COVID-19 is confirmed or suspected.

2) PPE

When attending a sudden death call or any scene where COVID-19 is confirmed or suspected, please adhere to the current departmental standards for PPE:

- Standard issued uniform with long sleeves.
- Gloves.
- Eye protection.
- Surgical mask or an appropriately fit-tested respiratory mask (e.g. with P100 filter).

3) DEFINITIONS

HOT ZONE: Area where the risk of contracting the virus is high and there are live individuals present that may have been exposed to COVID-19. All PPE measures are necessary.

WARM ZONE: Area where the risk of contracting the virus is high. All PPE measures are necessary.

COLD ZONE: Area where the risk of contacting the virus is low.

*Full PPE is recommended for Hot and Warm Zones.

4) LIKELIHOOD OF TRANSMISSION AT A SUDDEN DEATH SCENE

It is unknown exactly how long the COVID-19 virus can live inside of a deceased person but the likelihood of transmission is low. The greater risk would be on surfaces within the premises. Avoid touching scene surfaces where possible.

5) OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

- Members should limit handling and exposure to the deceased if possible. If the scene is contained, vacate the premises while awaiting the coroner/body removal.
- Members should only seize items from a sudden death scene when absolutely necessary. When seizing items, ensure gloves are worn. If items are soiled or contaminated, consider wearing an extra set of gloves.
- Seal items in a clean plastic bag. Use a two person system to avoid contamination whenever possible. Designate one officer as the clean officer and one as the dirty officer - similar to VPD's current drug handling procedures.

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6) OPERATIONAL STEPS

For sudden death calls at residences involving COVID-19, there are 5 potential scenarios that could arise:

1. A single death at a single residence (deceased is lone occupant).
2. A single death at a single residence, where other family/friends are present and living.
3. Multiple deaths at a single residence (ex. long term care home).
4. Multiple deaths at a single residence/area that is not a care home.
5. Multiple deaths at separate residences.

In all instances of COVID-19 deaths, a NCO and Car 10 need to be notified immediately.

➤ SINGLE DEATH AT RESIDENCE (LONE OCCUPANT)

- Once equipped with proper PPE, at least 1 member to enter the structure – WARM ZONE. Note: Consider the need for multiple members to enter. If exposure can be limited, attempt to leave one member at the door, within line of sight of the member entering. That member can also be responsible for any notes so the member entering does not further contaminate notebook, pen, etc. If the member entering the WARM ZONE wants to avoid further contamination, consider leaving personal items in their police vehicle (pens, cell phone, etc).
- Coroner to be notified that a suspected or actual COVID-19 death has occurred.
- PC's to coordinate body removal should coroner not attend.
Note: In either instance, members to consider asking coroner or body removal to put a surgical mask on the deceased before the body gets moved.
- Car 10 to determine if a command post is needed – COLD ZONE.
- After leaving the WARM ZONE, members to remove PPE in a safe manner and wash hands at earliest opportunity. Follow decontamination procedures as appropriate.

➤ SINGLE DEATH AT RESIDENCE (MULTIPLE OCCUPANTS)

- Priority needs to be locking down the building/house. Initial responding members can stay in vehicles and be overt while doing this.
- Once locked down, the responding NCO will designate a specific number of members to don full PPE.
- Those designated members will then enter the structure – HOT ZONE.
- Coroner to be notified that a suspected or actual COVID-19 death has occurred.
- PC's to coordinate body removal should coroner not attend.

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- *Note: In either instance, members to consider asking coroner or body removal to put a surgical mask on the deceased before the body gets moved.*
- Responding NCO to coordinate EHS, additional resources (from other districts if needed).
- Car 10 to determine if a command post is needed – COLD ZONE.
- Responding NCO to coordinate a safe staging location for other tenants, family members, etc. as needed – HOT ZONE.
- Members need to factor in cultural considerations/practices in this situation. Extra members might be needed to assist with a large family. Ensure proper PPE for members if dealing with a large number of exposed parties in a close area.
- Members should consider reminding any individuals that were in possible contact with the deceased to follow provincial guidelines for isolating and/or seeking medical attention as appropriate.

➤ MULTIPLE DEATHS AT A SINGLE RESIDENCE

- Priority needs to be locking down the building/house. Initial responding members can stay in vehicles and be overt while doing this.
- Once locked down, the responding NCO will designate a specific number of members to don full PPE.
Note: this will be determined by the number of deceased and/or number of additional family members present.
- Those members designated will then enter the structure – HOT ZONE.
- Coroner to be notified that suspected or actual COVID-19 deaths have occurred.
- PC's to coordinate body removal should coroner not attend.
- *Note: In either instance, members to consider asking coroner or body removal to put a surgical mask on the deceased parties before bodies are moved.*
- Responding NCO to coordinate EHS, additional resources (from other districts if needed).
- Car 10 to determine if a command post is needed – COLD ZONE.
- Responding NCO to coordinate a safe staging location for other tenants, family members, etc. as needed – HOT ZONE.
- Members should consider reminding any individuals that were in possible contact with the deceased to follow provincial guidelines for isolating and/or seeking medical attention as appropriate.

➤ CONSIDERATIONS FOR MULTIPLE DEATHS AT A SINGLE RESIDENCE/AREA (THAT IS NOT A CARE HOME)

- Same procedure listed above, with the priority being locking down the structure and ensuring designated members have full PPE before entering the HOT/WARM ZONE.

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- Once locked down, the responding NCO will designate a specific number of members to don full PPE.
Note: this will be determined by the number of deceased and/or number of additional family members present. This example also needs to factor any security concerns and if responding members cannot access force options easily, then extra members can be added as security. Roles to be clearly defined before entering HOT ZONE.

➤ MULTIPLE DEATHS AT MULTIPLE RESIDENCES

- Same procedure listed above, with the priority being locking down the structures and ensuring designated members have full PPE before entering the HOT/WARM ZONE.
- Additional resources will need to be used; to be coordinated by responding NCO's and Car 10.
- A command post will likely be needed, however Car 10 will make this decision.

7) ATTENDING OTHER SCENES (i.e. HOSPITALS OR HEALTHCARE FACILITIES) WHERE COVID-19 IS CONFIRMED OR SUSPECTED

Although this section does not deal with a specific sudden death scenario, it is worth identifying preferred protocols – in the interests of member safety.

- When attending these scenes, the following PPE needs to be worn:
 - o Standard issued uniform with long sleeves.
 - o Gloves.
 - o Eye protection.
 - o Surgical mask or an appropriately fit-tested respiratory mask (e.g. with P100 filter).
- Like medical staff and hospital workers, it is essential that VPD personnel attending hospitals or other locations where COVID-19 may be present (or dealing with potentially infected persons) be mindful of infection control and take appropriate universal precautions: such as social distancing where possible, washing hands, and the use of PPE.
- Dr. Vu has arranged for expedited attention for S. 28 MHA arrests that attend VGH and St Paul's. Consideration should be given to exposing the least number of members to the hospital environment while still maintaining officer safety. When attending the hospital, if they desire, members may request a face mask to wear with eye protection, gloves and mask.

NOTE: The proper donning and removal of PPE is essential in stopping the spread of COVID-19 through contamination. If you have any questions in regards to donning and removing PPE, please contact your DOC liaison.

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8) BODY STORAGE OPTIONS

Currently, all major hospitals in the Greater Vancouver area have additional refrigeration trucks to deal with an overflow of bodies. Based on the current death rate, this should meet anticipated needs. If there is an unexpected spike in the death rate, alternate options will be explored.

9) ADDITIONAL INFORMATION - AUTOPSIES

Autopsy protocols have been addressed in separate documentation. For any questions regarding protocols and PPE at autopsies please speak with VPD Forensic Identification Unit or Invest Bronze.

10) ADDITIONAL PPE INFORMATION

As per the PPE guidelines on the COVID-19 site, if members feel that they will be exposed for a long period of time or they feel that they need extra protection, TYVEX coveralls are available (through your Staff Sgts, DOC liaison, the kiosk, or from Car 10). They are not considered necessary at this time based on medical advice.

Members should be aware that the proper donning and removing of coveralls is important in order to stop contamination. An infographic outlining how to properly remove PPE can be found [here](#).