



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
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Department of Public Health  
Bureau of Health Care Safety and Quality  
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**Memorandum**

**TO:** Fire Chiefs  
Police Chiefs  
Emergency Medical Service Directors

**FROM:** Elizabeth Daake Kelley, MPH, MBA, Director  
Bureau of Health Care Safety and Quality

**SUBJECT:** Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Guidance for First Responders and EMS  
Entering Long Term Care Facilities

**DATE:** April 6, 2020

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) continues to work with state, federal and local partners on the outbreak of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), caused by the virus SARS-CoV-2. We appreciate the critical role you have in responding to this evolving situation.

On April 2, 2020, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issued additional guidance to long term care facilities. In its guidance, CMS shared that long term care facilities have become an accelerator for COVID-19 because residents, who are generally vulnerable to complications from the virus, are even more vulnerable in an enclosed environment like a nursing home. As an example, in one Maryland nursing home, COVID-19 cases grew from one confirmed case in one day to 64 confirmed cases the next day.

In alignment with CMS and due to the widespread community transmission of COVID-19, DPH is advising all first responders, including but not limited to, fire personnel, law enforcement, and emergency medical services (EMS) personnel, to assume when responding to an event at a long term care facility that the individuals they are interacting with are infected with COVID-19. First responders and EMS personnel should don the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) recommended for caring for individuals who are infected with COVID-19.

Please visit DPH's website that provides up-to-date information on COVID-19 in Massachusetts: <https://www.mass.gov/2019coronavirus>