

CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK



COVID-19: Guidance for Fire Department and Union Operations

This guidance is designed to assist our affiliates and their fire departments in returning to normal operations in accordance with federal, state and local guidance as communities begin to reopen. It is important to maintain the health and safety of our workforce as we continue to provide optimum service to our communities during this transition.

Due to the unique occupational exposures, the IAFF recommends a cautious approach for our members. Therefore, the recommended changes between phases is minor.

Proposed State or Regional Gating Criteria: The U.S. federal government has proposed [three-phase guidelines](#) for states and regions to reopen. It is important to mitigate the risk of resurgence, continue to protect those most vulnerable and make decisions that are based on the most up-to-date data during this transition. Before entering each phase, the following gating criteria must be met:

Your jurisdiction and areas you provide mutual aid must see a 14-day period of downward trajectory in the following three areas:

Symptoms:

- Downward trajectory of influenza-like illnesses reported within a 14-day period; **or**
- Downward trajectory of COVID-like syndromic cases reported with a 14-day period

Cases:

- Downward trajectory of documented cases within a 14-day period; **or**;
- Downward trajectory of positive tests as a percent of total tests within a 14-day period (flat or increasing volume of tests)

Hospitals:

- Treating all patients without crisis care; and;
- Robust testing in place for at-risk healthcare workers, including emerging anti-body testing

States, counties, and local jurisdictions (including mutual aid areas) should monitor state and local public health department COVID-19 patient tracking tools to ensure their areas have met the above gating criteria before entering any of the phases. Local officials may transition their state or province into a phase based on the information above, but we urge departments to make their own analysis prior to entering a new phase.

For example, the state/province may report it is ready to enter Phase One because state/provincial data has shown a 14-day period of downward trajectory, but a specific county or local jurisdiction may have not yet met that threshold. Therefore, it is important to advise against entering Phase One.

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COVID-19: Phase One and Two Guidance for Fire Department and Union Operations

As municipalities enter Phase One or Phase Two, it is important for affiliates to continue to practice the following guidance due to the additional occupational exposures:

Administration and Operations

- Practice social distancing (maintain 6-foot separation when possible), including in sleeping quarters, and avoid congregating in common areas.
- Perform self-screening, including temperature checks twice daily both on and off duty and continue to quarantine or isolate members as necessary.
- Wear a surgical mask (cloth mask if there is a shortage of surgical masks) while on duty in the fire station and when in public, including meetings regarding grievances and negotiations, and meetings with elected officials, etc.
- Wear a surgical mask (cloth mask if there is a shortage of surgical masks) while off duty, especially in circumstances where social distancing cannot be maintained or when using mass transit.
- Properly don and doff the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) while treating Persons Under Investigation or confirmed COVID-19 patients to include, N95 or higher respirator, gloves, impervious gown, goggles or full-face shield.
- Practice good hand and skin hygiene
- Post hand-washing signs upon entering the union office and in the restrooms.
- Properly decontaminate all equipment to include apparatus, equipment, stations, phones, desks, computer keyboards, doorknobs, tables and other contact surfaces using an EPA-approved disinfectant.
- Fire stations and union offices should remain closed to the public and the media.
- Strongly consider special accommodations for personnel who are members of a vulnerable population.

Training/Union Business/Travel

- No multi-unit training, drills or union meetings should be held during this phase.
- **Phase Two only: limit the number of personnel for fire department training to a group no larger than 10 in any given area while maintaining social distancing.**
- Disinfect frequently used items and surfaces as much as possible in the union office (doorknobs, computer keyboards, desks, tables, phones, etc.)
- Continue to hold union meetings virtually. Check your local's Constitution and By-Laws as it relates to meeting quorums and the use of videoconferencing for other member services.
- **Phase Two only: nonessential travel (e.g. conferences, trainings, etc.) can resume.**
- Instructors/IAFF instructors (Peer Support, Peer Fitness, HazMat, etc.) in same region:
 - No travel restrictions for instructors who live in the same phase level area where the training is being conducted.
 - Training for recruits should be a priority, especially where recruits need the training to graduate and join the ranks.
 - Do not travel to or use a connecting flight in a region in a more restrictive phase level.

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COVID-19: Phase Three Guidance for Fire Department and Union Operations

As municipalities enter Phase Three, it is important for our affiliates to continue to practice the following guidance due to the additional occupational exposures:

Administration and Operations

- **Phase Three only: Members can resume public interactions but should practice social distancing (maintain 6-foot separation when possible).**
- Perform self-screening, including temperature checks twice daily both on and off duty and continue to quarantine or isolate employees as necessary.
- Wear a surgical mask (cloth mask if there is a shortage of surgical masks) while on duty in the fire station and when in public if social distancing cannot be maintained.
- Wear a surgical mask (cloth mask if there is a shortage of surgical masks) while off duty, especially in circumstances where social distancing cannot be maintained or when using mass transit.
- Properly don and doff the appropriate personal protective equipment while treating Persons Under Investigation or confirmed COVID-19 patients to include, N95 or higher respirator, gloves, impervious gown, goggles or full-face shield.
- Practice good hand and skin hygiene.
- Properly decontaminate all equipment, apparatus and stations using an EPA-approved disinfectant.
- **Phase Three only: Fire stations can open to the public and administrative personnel can return to work and continue social distancing practices.**
- **Phase Three only: Resume fire and life safety inspections. Inspectors should wear surgical masks (cloth masks if there is a shortage of surgical masks).**
- Vulnerable members can resume normal duties but should maintain vigilance regarding social distancing as much as possible.

Training/Union Business/Travel

- **Phase Three only: Resume multi-unit training, drills and union meetings.**
- Non-essential travel is allowed.
- Instructors/IAFF instructors (Peer Support, Peer Fitness, HazMat, etc.) in same region:
 - No travel restrictions for instructors who live in the same phase level area where the training is being conducted.
 - Training for recruits should be a priority, especially where recruits need the training to graduate and join the ranks.
 - Assess the need for additional trainings.
 - Do not travel to or use a connecting flight in a region in a more restrictive phase level