Use of structural fire fighter PPE for patient encounters should be a last resort. In case of an incidental exposure, this guide provides the proper care, cleaning/sanitization of structural fire fighter PPE.

The primary purpose of protective clothing is simply as a contamination shield to prevent later transfer of COVID-19 to mucous membranes through subsequent transfer from hand to the mouth, nose or eyes (auto- or self-inoculation).

Protective garments, gloves, and footwear materials and seams used in products certified to NFPA 1971 are tested for viral penetration resistance with a diameter of 27 nm or larger. COVID-19 measures between 60 and 140 nm.

NOTE – Turnout clothing ensembles (garments, helmets, hoods, gloves and footwear) have multiple interfaces and closures that may permit some penetration of bio-aerosols, but they will likely significantly limit the exposures.

Cleaning and Sanitizing Turnout Gear

- Wherever possible, refer to manufacturer cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting instructions. Seek advice from the manufacturer on appropriate cleaning agents, sanitizers or disinfectants and processes and their limitations, if not addressed in the instructions.
- Clean and sanitize any element of structural firefighting protective clothing in accordance with procedures established in NFPA 1851. These procedures include:
  - Launder garments in a programmable, front-loading washer/extractor that has ample capacity for the wash load.
  - Use a pre-soak stage of at least 10 minutes with an EPA-approved laundry sanitizer additive. Use sanitizer at concentration and application per supplier instructions.
  - Follow the pre-soak with draining the washer/extractor and a 4-minute extraction step.
  - Wash garments with an appropriate detergent and multiple rinse cycles but apply specialized cleaning at the maximum wash temperature up to 140°F.
  - Dry garments by air drying, using a drying cabinet or applying machine drying on a no heat or air-dry option.
- Use an Independent Service Provider (ISP) for conducting, sanitization and specialized cleaning.