



June 28, 2021

## King County EMS Personal Protective Equipment Guidelines

**Background:** The pandemic has required a critical assessment of personal protective equipment (PPE) to support EMS provider safety. EMS medical leadership in conjunction with regional infectious disease experts continue to monitor evidence about SARS-CoV-2 transmission. As of summer 2021, there is a declining incidence of new infections. This decline corresponds to increasing vaccination across King County and helps inform PPE strategy. Evidence increasingly supports vaccination as a key strategy to fight the pandemic. A personal decision to get vaccinated amplifies safety and good health as the vaccine provides benefits for an expanding circle of persons to include the vaccine recipient, their work colleagues, family and friends, patients, and the general public.

Below are consolidated guidelines regarding PPE best practices.

**Patient Care:** For patient care, the baseline standard for PPE requires EMS providers don a surgical mask, eye protection, and gloves. For patients requiring an aerosol generating procedure<sup>1</sup> or for patients with known or high suspicion of active COVID illness, providers should use an N-95 mask or equivalent (instead of a surgical mask) and also don a gown<sup>2</sup>. Whenever possible, risk of transmission can also be reduced by placing a surgical mask on the patient.

**In-Station Practices:** In the station, PPE and social distancing practices depend on vaccination status. Consistent with policy from Washington State Labor and Industries, EMS providers are not required to mask or practice social distancing in quarters *if they are vaccinated*. Positive vaccination status must be verified by the home agency per Labor and Industries policy. EMS providers without verification of positive vaccination status must continue to wear a mask and social distance while in station and at work.

Guidelines can change going forward and KCEMS will remain vigilant regarding new evidence about best practices for PPE.

*1 - Aerosol generating procedures include bag-valve ventilation, intubation, or other forms of positive pressure ventilation, non-rebreather or high-flow oxygen, and nebulizer therapy.*

*2 - Gowns should continue to be used whenever there is concern for bodily fluids or other contact precautions.*

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