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To: Ohio EMS providers, EMS agencies, and EMS medical directors

From: Carol A. Cunningham, M.D., FAAEM, FAEMS
State Medical Director

Date: April 9, 2020

**RE: Disposal of Waste from Patients with Suspected or Known COVID-19 Infection
Preservation of Personal Protective Equipment for Airway Protection**

The Ohio Department of Public Safety, Division of EMS has recently received inquiries regarding the management of waste following the treatment of a patient with suspected or known COVID-19 infection.

The current CDC recommendations state that the management of laundry, food service utensils, and medical waste should also be performed in accordance with routine procedures. In other words, the items that are contaminated with blood or body fluids that one would normally place in a biohazard container or bag following the treatment of a patient who is not infected with COVID-19 are the same items that will require this form of disposal following the treatment of a patient with suspected or known COVID-19 infection. The full CDC guidance on this topic can be accessed via the following link:

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control-recommendations.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Finfection-control%2Fcontrol-recommendations.html

Personal protective equipment (PPE) is a critical life-sparing commodity during this pandemic and its use for all patient encounters is essential to maintain our workforce. In order to sustain the protection of all of us, the PPE that protect our airway passages (surgical masks and N-95 respirators) **should not be disposed** following each patient encounter unless it becomes damaged or visibly soiled. EMS providers should strictly refrain from wearing makeup prior to donning PPE to maintain the cleanliness of these items and to maximize their ability for reuse when resources are scarce and/or to retain their eligibility for decontamination.

The State of Ohio has the capacity, through the technology and services of Battelle, to decontaminate compatible N-95 respirators. The respirators must be visibly clean and

Mission Statement

"to save lives, reduce injuries and economic loss, to administer Ohio's motor vehicle laws and to preserve the safety and well being of all citizens with the most cost-effective and service-oriented methods available."

undamaged to be eligible for their decontamination process. A clean and intact N-95 respirator can be decontaminated up to 20 times before disposal of the device is indicated.

During this time where the needs exceed the resources on so many fronts, particularly in the hot zones of COVID-19, all of us need to exercise a heightened diligence to conserve PPE. We have the goal that the highest level of PPE is directed to those who are primarily tasked to the first response and provision of care to patients with COVID-19. With the availability of an avenue for decontamination, the disposal of one clean and undamaged N-95 respirator may be equivalent to condemning up to 20 of our fellow first responders and healthcare workers to face COVID-19 without adequate PPE and unnecessarily cost them their lives.

Contact your local emergency management agency (EMA) for resource requests.

Thank you, once again, for your dedicated service!