



Saratoga County EMS Council

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www.saratogaems.org



April 26, 2009

Urgent Swine Flu Notice to All Saratoga County EMS Agencies

An outbreak of influenza in Mexico has been linked to cases of flu in the United States and Canada by the World Health Organization. There have been confirmed cases in New York City. The U.S. Department of Health and Human declared a public health emergency this afternoon. The following outlines key strategies for EMS agencies (including Fire Department first responders) to implement for protection of their members and to be public health partners in managing patient care. Dispatch level strategies are also outlined to make providers aware of actions taken by the County EMS Coordinator.

There are a number of steps EMS agencies should take to identify potential victims, protect their members, provide excellent patient care and participate in the public health process. The County EMS Coordinator will continue to monitor state and national discussions until the event is concluded. Identified trends, new information, and best practices will be disseminated through the County EMS list server and the EMS Council website (www.saratogaems.org). Individual agencies are asked to share their experiences, policies, procedures and other relevant information by contacting the County EMS Coordinator, Mike McEvoy (mcevoymike@aol.com).

Agency Chiefs and Administrators:

- Notify all members and staff of the emerging problem.
- Review and update local plans using the CDC EMS Pandemic Preparedness Checklist (www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/healthcare/emgncymedical.html).
- Monitor emails and the EMS Council web site.
- Assure agency leaders are subscribed to the County EMS List Server (www.saratogaems.org/subscribe.htm).
- Monitor news reports and government resources, such as:
 - the Centers for Disease Control (www.cdc.gov)
 - www.pandemicflu.gov
 - www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm58d0424a1.htm
 - www.cdc.gov/flu/swine/recommendations.htm
 - www.cdc.gov/swineflu/investigation.htm
 - the Public Health Agency of Canada (www.publichealth.gc.ca)
- For a minute to minute update and summary of the swine flu investigation, visit the CDC at www.cdc.gov/swineflu/whatsnew.htm?s_cid=tw_epr_68.

Direct Care EMS Providers:

- Request additional information from EMS Dispatch when sent to respiratory, sick person and fever related calls if limited initial dispatch information is provided.

- Perform initial interview of all patients from at least 2 meters (6.5 feet) away to determine if personal protective equipment precautions are necessary.
- Place a mask on all patients with suspected influenza symptoms before approach. Use a surgical mask or non-rebreather mask (when oxygen is required).
- Avoid droplet producing procedures whenever possible including nebulizers, bag-valve-mask, suctioning or intubation. If bag-valve-masks are needed, use BVMs with HEPA filters whenever possible.
- Recommended PPE for taking care of ill/potentially infected patients includes: gloves and N95 or better respirators. PPE should be donned and doffed according to published guidelines to prevent cross contamination, including faceshield/eye and gown protection when splash or airborne contamination is possible.
- Alert receiving hospital personnel of the possibility of an infectious patient as soon as possible and hold suspected infectious patients in the ambulance until their destination in the hospital is known, rather than immediately moving them into the emergency department.
- Perform a thorough cleaning of the stretcher and all equipment that has come in contact with or been within 2 meters (6.5 feet) with an approved disinfectant, upon completion of the call following CDC interim guidelines for cleaning EMS transport vehicles (www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/healthcare/cleaning_ems.html).

Implemented at Saratoga County 911 EMS Dispatch Points:

- Flag MPDS protocols 6, 10, 18 and 26 for further interrogation according to SRI (severe respiratory infection [flu-like] symptoms) screen to obtain, at a minimum, the following:
 - Have they recently been in Mexico or been exposed to anyone that has been in Mexico, and how long was the person in Mexico (paying particular attention to those who stayed for 7 days or longer)?
 - Are they febrile or have a fever, and if so, is it higher than 101°F (38°C)?
 - Do they have a cough or any other respiratory symptoms such as difficulty breathing?
- Relay responses to these questions to EMS responders before they arrive on scene.

Note that the most severe flu cases so far have been mostly adults from ages 25 to 45, but patients of all ages have been infected, so the same precautions should be used for all patients.

These procedures should remain in effect until the threat has been controlled and you are so notified by the County EMS Coordinator. Please direct any questions to Coordinator Mike McEvoy at mcevoymike@aol.com.

Issued April 26, 2009 at 20:30 hours