

Guidance for Ambulette Services on COVID-19

March 17, 2020

The Ohio Department of Health, the Ohio Department of Public Safety and the Division of EMS are closely monitoring updates on COVID-19. Ohio EMS and the medical transportation section is committed to following the rules, guidance and recommendations of Ohio Governor Mike DeWine, the Ohio Department of Health, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Important Steps

There are steps that Ambulette transportation agencies can take to minimize the risk to employees, riders, and the general public. Each agency is encouraged to scale these actions for their system. Specific steps include:

- Update your agency's Standard Operating Procedures for cleaning and disinfecting ambulettes and stations.
- Educate and train employees about proper hand hygiene, cough etiquette, and social distancing techniques.
- Develop work practices and controls to provide additional protection to employees and customers, such as the proper selection, use and disposal of personal protective equipment.
- Develop a plan to screen your employees for fever over 100.4°F and general wellbeing prior to starting their shift.
- Provide information to customers and through your media platforms on the steps you are taking to minimize the risk to riders.

Steps to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19

- Wash your hands for 20 seconds and use alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- When coughing and sneezing, cover your mouth and nose with your flexed elbow or tissue – and discard the tissue immediately into a closed bin.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Stay home if you have a fever or show any signs of a respiratory illness such as coughing or sneezing.
- Clean all "High-Touch" surfaces every day.

General Guidance – Call Taking / Dispatch

When taking requests for transports, the call taker / dispatcher, in addition to taking the information about the transport, needs to identify current health information about the person being transported:

- Inquire about travel and direct exposure history within the previous 14 days.

- Has the patient had direct contact with a person who is confirmed or suspected to have COVID-19 (including local cases, if applicable)?
 - If yes, does the patient have a fever, cough, or shortness of breath?
 - Fever may be a helpful contributing sign, but should not be used exclusively to determine the presence or absence of disease as it is not universally present in cases of serious communicable diseases.
- Consider discussing with the patient / facility if the transport is a necessity or if it could possibly be rescheduled at a later date.
- Consider calling the destination of the transport (i.e. medical facility / doctor's office) prior to the transport to confirm the appointment and to identify any new requirements the location may have put in place due to COVID-19. In addition, inform the destination of any findings of the patient's current health condition discovered by the call taker / dispatcher.

NOTE: Nursing homes, hospitals and other medical facilities have been instructed to limit access to their locations and take steps to medically screen those individuals who require access, including ambulance and ambulette personnel. Other facilities are screening the patient prior to their appointment to determine if they will be seen or not.

- Consider providing surgical masks for the driver and patient to wear during transport.
- Consider transporting only one patient at a time and avoid taking additional riders in the ambulette.

Ambulette Decontamination

- Any visibly soiled surface must first be decontaminated using a disinfectant according to directions on the label after each transport.
- Disinfect all potentially contaminated / high touch surfaces, including the wheelchair, with disinfectant according to directions on the label after each transport.
- Disinfect the driver compartment to include steering wheel, vehicle controls and knobs, and door handles with disinfectant according to directions on the label as needed. In particular, these surfaces should be disinfected at least several times each day.

Links for Additional Information:

Ohio Department of Health

<https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/covid-19/>

Centers for Disease Control

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/index.html>

Interim Guidance for Business and Employers

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fspecific-groups%2Fguidance-business-response.html