



State of Maryland

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To: Jurisdictional Advisory Committee  
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From: Theodore Delbridge, MD, MPH  
Executive Director

Timothy Chizmar, MD, FACEP  
State EMS Medical Director

Date: May 13, 2020

RE: COVID-19 Testing for First Responders

MIEMSS is collaborating with the Maryland Department of Health and Integrated Cellular and Molecular Diagnostics (ICMD), a clinical laboratory, to provide dedicated access to COVID-19 testing for EMS clinicians and other first responders. Testing may be indicated for public safety and commercial ambulance personnel who have sustained a suspected exposure to COVID-19 or who have symptoms potentially compatible with COVID-19. Information to help assess risk of exposure can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-risk-assesment-hcp.html>. In cases of suspected exposures, testing should not be done prior to 72 hours after the exposure occurred. Testing sooner increases the risk of obtaining a false negative result and being inappropriately reassured.

COVID-19 testing specimens are collected via nasopharyngeal swabs. While EMS agencies and commercial ambulance services will have varying resources, such as occupational health services, to collect specimens, EMTs, CRTs, and Paramedics may collect nasopharyngeal swabs for COVID-19 testing under their current scopes of practice.

We emphasize the importance of appropriate orientation and preparation.

- The following *NEJM* video link demonstrates the nasopharyngeal swab technique: <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMVcm2010260>.
- MIEMSS will be making available additional training materials.
- Each specimen kit includes instructions that are to be carefully reviewed.
- Appropriate personal protective equipment is mandated, including N95 respirator, eye protection, gloves, and gown.

Specimen kits will be available from MIEMSS for distribution. Each kit will include a requisition that must be fully completed, including ordering physician information. Courier service will be available to transport specimens to the clinical laboratory. ICMD will perform all testing and report the results to the ordering physician.