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## Guidelines

# Safety for Law Enforcement Agencies in Wake of COVID-19

### Objective

To provide guidelines for the law enforcement agencies, supporting national response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Along with recommendations on personal safety, the guidelines provide information on how to work and perform during the pandemic with reduced risk of COVID-19 infection and transmission.

### Rationale

The Governments of Pakistan is taking serious measures to isolate the COVID-19 and minimize its spread among population. The current emergency situation and the imperative to preserve the health and safety of the population has forced establishment to put in place extraordinary measures to slow down the spread of the virus including measures of social distancing, as well as reduction of freedom of movement. In this context, law enforcement officers have a very sensitive and important role and they are in the front-line taking all necessary measures to ensure the order and security.

While on the other hand, they must support communities during the COVID-19 pandemic by enforcing essential health and safety measures at the national and local levels. Their role as first-line responders also exposes them to a high risk of contamination. Cognizant of the situation, one of the most important factors in the current situation is to ensure the personal safety of law enforcement officials to prevent infection while performing their duties.

### Instructions

#### A) Avoid Exposure to the Virus

There is currently no vaccine nor specific treatment against COVID-19. The best way to prevent illness and spread is to avoid exposure to the virus. The measures include;

- Wash hands frequently, regularly and thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or cleaning hands with an alcohol-based hand rub/sanitizer (70-90% alcohol content)
- Maintain at least 6 feet/2 meters distance between any two persons
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth
- Wear a face mask (disposable/cloth face covering) and/or gloves during work shifts.
- Follow standard operating procedures for the containment and disposal of used PPE.



- Practice respiratory hygiene i.e. sneezing or coughing into a tissue/handkerchief followed by discarding it immediately and hand washing, OR coughing into own elbow.
- Clean or decontaminate work equipment especially in case of probable contact with a COVID-19 patient
- Avoid or limit direct contact with documents; use gloves if possible, or wash your hands immediately after handling a document.
- Avoid direct contact with individuals who may have COVID-19, unless having appropriate PPE
- When dealing with uncooperative individuals, limit contact and practise hand hygiene.
- Consider voluntary isolation and seek early medical care if feeling unwell.

## **B) Protect Family Members and Friends/Coming Off Duty**

Law enforcement duties can potentially expose officers and personnel to COVID-19. The personnel should maintain social distancing measures and follow following steps when returning home;

- Clean or decontaminate work equipment, including shoes, avoiding the spread of particles/dust;
- Take off duty clothes and wash them with laundry soap as soon as feasible. Handle, transport and wash them in way that limits exposure to skin, eyes, environment and other clean clothes (avoid shaking clothes);
- Take a shower or wash exposed skin with soap and water;
- Self-monitor for signs of illness.

## **C) In case of Exposure to COVID-19**

- Follow proper procedures (put in place by the LEA) for reporting sick in case any worker feels unwell while on duty or off duty
- Law enforcement deputies/personnel who have had an exposure to COVID-19 but remain asymptomatic should seek medical advice and follow instructions given by relevant medical authority but in case that is not available then following measures should be adopted;
  - ✓ **Self-Quarantine:** Individual should quarantine himself at home for 14 days and restrict all outside activities, except to get medical care
  - ✓ **Regular Monitoring:** Individuals should self-monitor for any sign of illness.
  - ✓ **Pre-Screen:** After 14 days, when returning to duty, the duty officer should measure the individual's temperature and assess symptoms prior to the start of their shift.
  - ✓ **Wear a Mask:** Individuals should wear a face mask at all times while in the workplace.
  - ✓ **Social Distance:** The individual should maintain six feet and practice social distancing as work duties permit.
  - ✓ **Disinfect:** The individual should routinely clean and disinfect all areas, including shared equipment.
- In the event the law enforcement personnel becomes sick during the duty, and develops symptoms consistent with COVID-19, should be isolated immediately and follow guidance from healthcare authorities after notification.



- Information on any individual they had contact with during the time they had symptoms, and two days prior, should also be identified and considered exposed.

#### **D) Measures to be taken by Law Enforcement Agencies**

- Encourage personnel to practice regular hand-washing and maintaining a distance of at least six feet to provide protection from transmission of COVID-19.
- Provide proper training for use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for respiratory protection and to avoid cross contamination, if available.
- Provide thermal guns or temperature scanners to all facilities so that thermal screening can be carried out appropriately.
- Display preventive measures as per guidelines at prominent places in the work environment
- Allow adequate time for officers/personnel to decontaminate after public contact.
- Implement virtual or remote roll calls and shift changes to avoid clustering of people, if possible.
- Clean and disinfect equipment, common areas, and transport vehicles frequently.
- Work with human resources department to identify a mechanism for tracking the number of law enforcement personnel out of work resulting from the potential contraction of COVID-19.
- Supervisors should provide clear guidance to personnel regarding protocol for sick leave usage in the event an officer becomes ill and unable to work.
- Explore alternative housing options for law enforcement personnel on a case-by-case basis to limit potential exposure of COVID-19 to at-risk family members.
- Provide mental health and well-being support to workers to prevent burnout and stress
- Consider easy wash and wear uniforms for uniformed officers.

*Note: The above recommendations are being regularly reviewed by the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations & Coordination and will be updated based on the international & national recommendations and best practices.*

*The Ministry acknowledges the contribution of Dr Farah Ashraf, Dr Ahsan M Ahmad, and HSA/ HPSIU/ NIH team to compile these guidelines.*

#### **References:**

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2. IACP, Law Enforcement Officer Exposure to COVID-19, <https://www.theiacp.org/resources/document/law-enforcement-officer-exposure-to-covid-19>
3. Guidelines for Policing during the Covid-19 Emergency, Nigeria
4. What Law Enforcement Personnel need to know about Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

**For more information, please contact:**

HSA/ HPSIU/ NIH, PM National Health Complex, Islamabad

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<http://nhsrco.gov.pk/>

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