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OREGON FIRE SERVICE CORONAVIRUS TASKFORCE

12/15/2020 Information Bulletin 2020-12 COVID-19 Reminders and Face Masks in Fire Stations

Oregon OSHA enacted temporary rules in November regarding COVID-19 minimum standards in the workplace. The Oregon Fire Service Coronavirus Response Team (OFSCRT) would like to offer clarifying information and encourage fire agencies to evaluate their individual needs and determine where to be more restrictive when necessary. Fire agencies have done a great job adapting procedures to reduce the risk of COVID in emergency and non-emergency responses thus far, however as community spread increases it will be important that the fire service continue to monitor the impacts of Covid-19 on our personnel and ensure measures are in place to protect them.

One area of clarification from the OSHA rules involves the concept of living areas (see Appendix A-17). Each organization must define their living quarters and designate such areas with signage. Living quarters are areas that are not accessible by the public and other agency staff. Closing a station to the public and maintaining administrative staff is not a living quarter and face masks are still required.

Within the designated living quarters, employees assigned to live and work in such areas do not have to wear face coverings per the OSHA rule. Employees are still required to maintain six feet of spacing throughout these areas. When personnel are outside living quarters, they should be in a face covering. This guidance would apply to both indoors and outdoors the work. OSHA provided this information in their Q & A document: "...Facial coverings are not required in outdoor settings where physical distancing can be consistently assured.

Other ways to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 within a fire station are:

- Require self-screening and monitoring to ensure employees are not experiencing symptoms. If employees are experiencing symptoms require them to stay home and seek medical attention.
- If someone has been exposed to COVID-19, require them to stay home and seek guidance from their medical provider.
- Encourage station crews to adopt a contactless shift change. The on-coming crew can enter the station together as the off-going crew leaves the station. Critical information can be discussed from a distance greater than six feet, non-critical information can be passed via telephone. Limit employees from lingering in the station at shift change.
- Wear masks within the station at all times, except when eating and drinking or within your private room.
- Sanitation is key. Employees should be sanitizing workspaces at the beginning of each shift and during regular intervals throughout the shift.
- Postpone department and station in person social gatherings such as holiday events.