Date: January 31, 2020

To: EMS Providers

From: The Wisconsin EMS Office

Interim Guidance for Emergency Medical Service (EMS) Providers in Wisconsin Regarding COVID-19 associated with the Outbreak in Wuhan, China

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Division of Public Health (DPH) are closely monitoring an outbreak caused by COVID-19 that originated in Wuhan, China. Because guidance may change, continue to check the CDC COVID-19 Situation Summary webpage and the DPH Outbreaks and Investigations webpage to find the most up-to-date information.

Key Messages

- Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that can cause illness in people and animals. They circulate regularly and can cause respiratory/flu-like illnesses each year.
- Rarely, coronaviruses that circulate between animals evolve and develop the ability to infect people, and then begin to spread between people. This can lead to new strains becoming more widespread.
- To date, no confirmed cases of COVID-19 infection have been detected in Wisconsin.
- The immediate health risk to the general public in the U.S. is currently low.
- Movement restrictions (quarantine) of asymptomatic individuals traveling from Wuhan are not warranted at this time.
- Influenza is currently the predominant respiratory virus circulating in Wisconsin.

For EMS Providers

Continue to follow your agency’s transmission-based infection prevention precautions and routinely ask patients about their travel history (and collect specific information about locations [city, country] and dates of travel).

For patients who have fever AND symptoms of lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough, shortness of breath), and have traveled from Wuhan City, China during the last 14 days before symptom onset, follow the CDC’s interim infection prevention and control recommendations, which include:

- Asking the patient to wear a surgical mask,
- Using standard, contact, and airborne precautions, and eye protection (e.g., goggles or a face shield).
Although there are no specific guidelines from the CDC for EMS at this time, the CDC's updated guidance provides recommendations for health care providers regarding the evaluation of patients for COVID-19, as well as prevention and infection control guidance, and information on specimen collection.