



Lloyd's Register
Foundation



INTERNATIONAL
MARITIME RESCUE
FEDERATION



Pandemic Response Guidance for Maritime Search and Rescue Organisations

FEBRUARY 2021

Unit 3: Priorities for SAR organisations during a global pandemic

- If possible, personnel should not belong to any of the identified high-risk groups as they could be more susceptible to the disease (e.g. medical status, or otherwise).
- All stand-by personnel should be given prior instructions for safe access to their operating base, including parking, changing facilities etc. or be provided a dedicated personnel briefing before going on board. This should emphasise protective measures, including personnel placement on board (wheelhouse or outdoor deck), use of personal protective equipment etc.



Photo: RNLI/David Edwards

Maintaining social distance can minimise the risk of infection.

Equipment

Any additional Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) required to minimise the risk of infection needs to be designed or adapted for service at sea, so as not to impede the safety of SAR personnel or others involved in the activity.

- If possible, there should be no sharing of personal equipment - all gear is for personal use only (e.g. survival suit, life jacket, helmet, other clothing).
- SAR units, equipment and personal gear should all be washed and disinfected once the SAR activity has ended.



Photo: Flavio Gasperini/SOS MEDITERRANEE

- All personnel should be aware of any revised guidance on first aid procedures to minimise risk of infection (e.g. wearing of masks for CPR and all other human contact etc.).
- Follow social distancing and personal hygiene protocols.
- Personnel should keep a safe distance between themselves wherever possible.
- Wash or sanitise hands before and after the activity.
- Wear gloves.
- Wear masks.

Photo: MRCC Georgia





Photo: Flavio Casperini/SOS MEDITERRANEE

Social distancing and hygiene protocols include:

- No sharing of personal equipment.
- All gear is for personal use only (e.g. survival suit, life jacket, helmet, other clothing).
- Keeping a safe distance between participants wherever possible.
- Participants should not attend if they have symptoms, feel unwell or have tested positive for the infection before the training.
- Washing hands before and after the training.
- Wearing gloves.
- Wearing masks - this is a decision that would need to be considered on a case-by-case basis, bearing in mind the prevailing national guidelines and the operational risks posed (e.g. by masks impeding communications).
- Consider mandatory screening before attending training or starting a prolonged duty shift.
- Wash and disinfecting SAR unit, equipment and personal gear, once the training is finished.

6.1 Wellbeing

Team welfare

During a pandemic, the welfare of all personnel is critically important. Those that have leadership responsibilities can play a crucial role in ensuring the physical and emotional welfare of their team.

If personnel are facing long periods of isolation, due to lockdown measures or periods of quarantine, this can have an impact on their wellbeing and mental health. It is really important to ensure personnel are staying in regular contact either by phone or online platforms. Ensure regular daily or weekly welfare checks are carried out on anybody who is in self isolation.

If personnel are involved in any traumatic incidents, you should be vigilant that procedures are followed to ensure those personnel are able to discuss the incident and to access support and counselling.

Personnel should have an awareness of the signs and symptoms of stress, post-traumatic stress (PTS) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Both stress and PTS should be taken seriously, rather than ignored, and appropriate advice should always be sought.

Photo: Flavio Casperini/SOS MEDITERRANEE



SAR personnel should be role models towards protecting the environment by following safe disposal of waste. They should also lead by example when following any safety protocols and regulations.

Safe disposal of potentially infected waste to reduce the spread of infectious diseases

The most common types of waste that are incorrectly disposed of are:

- Facial masks.
- Disposable gloves.
- Plastic bags.
- Food packaging.

Each country has its own waste disposal and recycling rules that, in some cases, can be revised in the light of the risks posed by the pandemic.

SAR organisations, like the general public, should always follow their own national waste disposal guidelines.

However, in general, we can say that:

- Non-reusable facial masks are not recyclable, so should be safely disposed of with general rubbish.

- Latex gloves are made with natural material, but are not compostable and so should be disposed of with general rubbish.
- Nitrile gloves are made with synthetic rubber, so should be disposed of with general rubbish.
- Vinyl gloves are made with PVC and so recycled as plastic.
- Any disposable protective clothing that has come into contact with (potentially) infected SAR personnel, casualty, patient or member of the public should be disposed of in accordance with the guidelines in country.

Considerations on how to reduce waste and minimise the risk of infection

- Don't leave your home if it's not necessary. Whether or not official advice is to stay at home, the more people go out, the more masks and gloves are consumed.
- Use reusable masks. After use, they can be washed and re-used, reducing the amount of trash and saving money.
- Dispose of waste responsibly, especially potentially infected waste.
- Avoid overfilling bins and empty waste bins regularly.
- Use recyclable material whenever possible.
- Avoid hand sanitizers if you are at home. Wash your hands twice and for a longer period instead.
- Avoid the use of single-use plastic. Don't use any plastic cups, plates, cutlery, or bottles at home or on any premises used by your organisation.

Photo: Flavio Gasperini/SOS MEDITERRANEE



Example: Medical/Hygiene issues related to COVID-19 Pandemic

This annex is an example of frequently asked questions (FAQs) that were compiled in 2020 during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. **It does not constitute the latest and updated advice.** However, it is shared in this manual as a reference to some of the types of medical and hygiene questions and issues that may arise during a pandemic.

Note:

For up-to-date information on medical and hygiene issues during a pandemic, refer to information from National Government Authorities and World Health Organization (WHO).

