March 18, 2020

To: First Responders

I'm writing to provide clear advice to your departments and members regarding self-isolation precautions related to the current COVID-19 pandemic.

In the course of your daily duties, you may come across citizens who are experiencing cold or flu-like symptoms. It is important to continue using appropriate personal protective equipment in line with established best practices. Citizens with cold or flu-like symptoms are being advised to contact their health care provider or 8-1-1 to determine if their additional risk factors constitute testing for COVID-19. If these citizens become patients in the health system, they will be assessed for testing for COVID-19.

Should these citizen test positive for COVID-19, public health will follow up with contacts of those citizen – this includes household contacts, first responders, and others that may have been in close proximity while they were experiencing symptoms. Public health will advise that these contacts, including first responders, self-isolate for a period of 14 days.

This process means that **you do not need to self-isolate if you assist a citizen who is experiencing symptoms, unless you are directed to by public health, or unless you begin to exhibit symptoms**. **Your department members do not have to self-isolate or cease operations** if you think you or another member have been exposed. As COVID-19 begins to spread in our communities, members may be advised to monitor yourself daily for symptoms. The most important thing you can do to protect others is stay home if you become sick.

Testing is available for all who need it, but not everyone requires a test. If you develop symptoms, use the BC COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool (https://covid19.thrive.health/).

Your departments have received advice on how to increase common sense practices to prevention infection and transmission in your workplace. This includes increasing the frequency of cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces with products already used for this purpose, ensuring soap is stocked, and putting measures in place that supports social distancing.

Ministry of Health

Office of the
Provincial Health Officer

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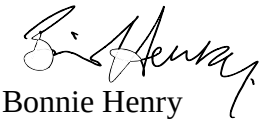
I will issue advice to you as the situation evolves. Please visit www.bccdc.ca/covid19 regularly for information and updates. Thank you for continuing to keep British Columbians safe.

Sincerely,



Bonnie Henry
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Provincial Health Officer

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