



An Important Update on COVID-19 from REMSA

As we all continue to monitor the COVID-19 situation, I want to share with you some specific things to know about REMSA and Care Flight's response. We are continuously working to provide uninterrupted, safe, compassionate, clinically excellent care to all of our patients while maintaining a healthy workforce and being a responsible and reliable healthcare partner in the communities we serve.

Organizationally, we have established an Incident Command System which facilitates the efficient management of an evolving situation like this. We remain in regular contact with local, state and federal officials.

REMSA, Care Flight and the Clinical Communications Center (dispatch) remain fully staffed and able to respond to all medical 9-1-1 calls.

Calling 9-1-1

Within Washoe County, if you call 9-1-1, there are a couple of additional questions that will be asked in addition to the standard questions about your address, phone number and the nature of the emergency. Now, you will also be asked whether or not you have specific symptoms like a fever over 100.4, a cough, difficulty breathing, runny nose or are experiencing malaise—a general feeling of discomfort or illness without an exact cause. These are important questions that help us prepare our paramedics to respond safely to your emergency.

When Paramedics Arrive

When REMSA paramedics arrive at your location, you may see them wearing additional personal protective equipment including gloves, eye protection or a face shield, an N-95 respirator mask and a gown. They may ask you, the patient, to wear a mask as well. It's important to understand that because COVID-19 is airborne, simple surgical masks do not prevent the spread of coronavirus. However, a simple surgical mask will minimize or reduce some of the spread of germs, particularly in confined spaces where healthcare workers are providing patient care (such as in an ambulance patient compartment).

In addition, the paramedics may use a temporary and disposable material to seal off the patient compartment from the driver compartment inside the ambulance. Typically, family members are allowed to ride in the ambulance during a transport, but right now, that will not be permitted if these response precautions are in place, and for all other transports, it will be strongly discouraged.

Disinfecting

Per REMSA's standard operating procedures, our ambulances are decontaminated after every patient transport using an Environmental Protection Agency-registered disinfectant. REMSA has ensured that this disinfectant has a manufacturer's statement as to the efficacy against COVID-19.

Use 9-1-1 for Emergencies Only

As a reminder, please remember that medical 9-1-1 should be reserved for [life-threatening emergencies](#) which include uncontrolled bleeding, cardiac arrest, difficulty breathing, trauma or suspected stroke symptoms.

Alternate Care Options

If you feel unwell and are not experiencing a medical emergency, consider using an alternate care option such as telehealth – an option that is offered by many health insurance providers. In addition, using an on-demand care provider like [Ready Responders](#) is an option. You can reach them by calling 775-229-4828. In addition, if you are experiencing symptoms, you can call the Washoe County Health District hotline at 775-328-2427 or the Renown Health respiratory illness screening line at 775-982-5000.

Care Flight

Currently, Care Flight also continues to transport patients under normal operations and follows the same personal protective equipment and equipment/aircraft disinfecting procedures as the ground ambulance providers. Similar to the ground ambulance transports, accompanying family members will not be allowed if precautions are in place. In addition, the crew will work with the family to determine the receiving current visitor policy at the receiving facility.

Employee Welfare

It is particularly important that our healthcare providers maintain their health and wellness. REMSA leadership is considering ways to offer on-site family care, expand personal time off for sick leave and accommodate administrative staff work from home policies.

Facility Cleaning

REMSA has expanded its campus-wide cleaning and disinfecting, including in our public education building. Hand sanitizer dispensers have been added and additional disinfecting wipes have been made available for administrative staff, as well. As mentioned above, all patient care equipment is disinfected after each patient contact, per REMSA's standard operating procedures.

Public and Student Education

Acting with a focus on health and safety, and in conjunction with our regional hospital education partners, REMSA's Center for Prehospital Education has suspended all public and clinical provider classes through April 3, 2020. If you are currently registered for a class, please email the Education Department at ayount@remsa-cf.com. If you are a clinical provider student, your instructor will contact you directly.

Resources

Please visit the following websites for additional information:

- [Washoe County Health District](#)
- [CDC](#)

Thank you and be well,

Dean C. Dow
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