Houston Fire Department Response to COVID-19: A Medical Direction Perspective

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EMS Incidents by Week

TX Opens

March 1
May 31

2018 2019 2020
Weekly Field Terminations

- 2018
- 2019
- 2020

- March 1
- May 31
- TX Opens
Effects on HFD Staffing

• Total Quarantines: 912
  • Released back to work: 620
  • Actively Quarantined: 292

• Total positive members: 145

• Total documented exposures through ICO: 4232
New Processes

• Rapid expansion of Infection Control Office, including increased medical direction involvement

• Novel educational resources for field providers

• Integrated testing strategy for HFD personnel

• Nursing Home/High Risk Facility Task Force

• Decontamination Task Force
Rapid Expansion of Infection Control Office

• Initially a single full-time civilian with assistance from temporary-assignment classified personnel

• Exposure evaluation calls

• ICO Policies
  • In addition to standard Medical Direction/Protocol updates

• Interpretation of CDC guidance
Novel Education Pathways to Field Personnel

• Existing website

• Video messages
  • Primarily medical direction
  • Initially produced daily
    • Eventually decreased in frequency
  • Driven by questions from field personnel and changing information
  • General Order requiring watching any new videos each shift

• Consolidation of COVID-19-related correspondence and training materials to one place
Integrated Testing Strategy

• Multiple avenues

• Commercial and municipal testing when possible
  • City- and state-sponsored drive-through testing centers
  • Walgreens
  • Free-standing ERs

• Separate private testing source established
  • Utilized for specific cases
  • Baylor College of Medicine lab
  • HFD Personnel trained to collect samples
Nursing Home/High Risk Facility Task Force

• Joint task-force with Houston Health Department

• Initially developed to provide education to nursing home personnel
  • 218 facilities visited

• Morphed into testing task-force with Governor’s order
  • HFD Personnel trained to collect samples
Decon Task Force

• Established in conjunction with HFD HAZMAT
  • Additional training provided to members

• Decontaminated all 93 fire stations multiple times

• Available on-call for apparatus with high-risk transports or other concerning situations
Questions?

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