



SAR Operations during Disease Outbreaks



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Controlling communicable disease outbreaks such as Covid-19 require that you *adjust field and base operations*. Consider consulting with local public health officials for recommendations if known disease in your community or if SAR volunteers come from an area with a high incidence of the disease. The Agency Having Jurisdiction may also have requirements for you to follow.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

Wear a well-fitting mask, either surgical or multi-layer cloth, when in Base or in close quarters in the field, especially when you cannot social-distance.

Wear an upgraded mask (i.e., N95) and/or a face shield if you're working with a person who is potentially contagious.

TEAM HOME RECOMMENDATIONS

Do not allow members who are not feeling 100% well to respond a mission.

Avoid carpooling. If you must carpool, mask.

FIELD RECOMMENDATIONS

Put spare disposable masks & hand sanitizer in your field pack.

Don't share equipment: assign equipment to a team member for the duration of the mission, or at least the task.

Place a mask on a subject when located; masks do not interfere with breathing at rest. If you have a litter shield, put it over the patient's face.

BASE RECOMMENDATIONS

Keep teams together throughout the mission as much as possible.

Clean equipment when returned; remember sanitizers require contact time to kill viruses.

Send people home if they develop disease symptoms.

Reduce base/searcher contact time: even with masks, brief and debrief field team leaders by handing off maps and TAFs, then return to 6-foot spacing to provide verbal instructions.

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Provide hand sanitizer or hand washing stations.

Don't share equipment, particularly high-use items like pens, staplers and radios.

Move activities outside whenever possible, and if inside, try to improve ventilation.

Be patient: Give searchers and base personnel time and space to do their job under unfamiliar conditions. Allow extra time for field teams to complete tasks and return to base. Give base personnel extra time to complete their tasks and interact with each other.

Communicate: Manage expectations. Use signs as reminders.

Increase distance between people at base:

- *Set up clearly-identified well-separated areas* for each base function.
- *Use long cables* to social-distance computers and to social-distance computers from team members downloading tracks from returning field GPS units.

- *Command vehicles are high-risk* for aerosol disease transmission; limit the number of people inside them.