MONITOR & MITIGATE
The Impact of COVID-19 on Public Safety

COVID-19 Response Coordination

The Problem: Information Overload

With the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic continuing to unfold in real time, your first responder organizations are constantly adjusting to new information—about local case numbers, best practices, medical findings, local resources, new virus strains, and vaccines.

Personnel are also asking questions—from "What counts as an exposure?" to "How do I actually get paid for overtime?" Fortunately numerous, effective approaches to coordinating the flow of information and addressing these and other issues exist.

Option 1: Designated COVID-19 Coordinator

Identify and assign a pandemic point-person who can manage several of these key tasks:

- Review scientific research and track all guidelines put out for first responders from national, state, county, and other trustworthy local sources

- Create and disseminate guidance for your department on PPE, service delivery, decontamination, and testing and quarantine

- Answer staff questions about new procedures, especially in the event of an exposure or positive test

- Attend [virtual] meetings with health departments, other area first responder departments, civilian governments, epidemiologists, and/or medical practitioners

> " *We had all that [information] funneled through that one person. And then that way, the rest of us could go on with our normal jobs.*
>
> *EMS Operations Director (Int. 2651)*

Be aware: Your coordinator is at a higher risk of burn-out, so additional support capacities and redundancies should be developed over time.

Resource Referrals
For project news and updates:
- Visit start.umd.edu/COVIDFirstResponders & secondsight-ts.com/covid19-topic-dashboard
- Subscribe to START's newsletter at start.umd.edu/newsletters
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IN THIS BRIEF

▶ What is a COVID-19 Response Task Force?

▶ How departments can implement a COVID-19 task force or point-person

▶ Other ways a task force is beneficial

RELEVANT FOR

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The goal of the project is to measure the impact of COVID-19 on first responders, identify and share best practices organizations can put in place to protect themselves in the short term, and identify strategies to make first responder organizations more resilient to pandemics in the future.

This brief is based on findings from initial interviews with 29 first responders representing 29 distinct departments across 16 states.

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SECOND SIGHT TRAINING SYSTEMS

Option 2: COVID-19 Task Force

Departments with sufficient funds, personnel, and time can form a full COVID-19 response task force. In addition to the key tasks for the coordinator, a task force brings additional capabilities by:

- Devising and implementing consistent and coherent policies within larger and more complex departments

- Coordinating and synchronizing across multiple first responder departments

- Participating in broader community preparedness efforts and serving as "a unified command team...about COVID" for a larger geographic area (Interview 2275)

- Allowing greater specialization in specific tasks—e.g., research, communication, PPE procurement

Resources

Science-based resources that are unbiased and updated regularly include: CDC; FEMA; IAFC; State Health Departments; WHO; National Police Foundation; DHS.

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Quick Tips: Other Ways a Task Force or Coordinator Can Help

Having a single point of contact for your department's first responders can improve confidence and keep the department running more smoothly. As a deputy chief in a mid-sized fire department put it:

> **" That's the biggest part of the monster...just managing all the people:** *to make sure that people were tested properly, to make sure that people were safe and kept off duty as necessary, to make sure that their family stays safe, to make sure that even something as seemingly minor as their payroll or their sick leave, **all those things were taken care of.*** (Int. 7184)

It's not too late: A coordinator or a task force can still help your department communicate new guidelines, address employee questions, and ensure that first responders can stay up-to-date and be appropriately involved in your community's vaccination plans.

HOW TO HELP
FIRST RESPONDERS

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