

MONITOR & MITIGATE

The Impact of COVID-19 on Public Safety

Indirect Effects: The Impact of COVID-19 on Organizations & Service Delivery

COVID-19 presents innumerable challenges to first responders. There are three ways it may affect your organization:

Environmental Effects – Changes in the operational environment, available resources, work conditions, or the level or type of demand for services.

Direct Effects – Threats to your personnel from COVID-19-related illness, including absenteeism, stress, and quarantines.

Indirect Effects – Impacts on your operations due to the combination of environmental and direct effects. These include changes to how services are delivered, training slow-downs, or increased healthcare costs.

You can mitigate the impact of this pandemic on your community. Your response, and the actions of community members, will make the difference.

Indirect Effects— Depending on the severity of the pandemic in your community, you may experience significant Environmental and Direct effects. Ripple effects can influence the way you provide services and how your organization trains, budgets, and communicates.

There are short-term and long-term indirect effects. These include:

1. **Service Delivery Changes:** To protect personnel and the community, organizations may have to modify how they deliver services. For example, law enforcement may deal with petty crimes by issuing summons in lieu of arrest. Police organizations are also handling more calls remotely ([Lum et al., 2020](#)).
2. **Reduced Ability to Deliver Services:** Fewer available personnel, social distancing requirements, and other preventative measures may cause delays, productivity reductions, or an inability to meet the demand for your services.
3. **Workplace Modifications:** Modifications to the workplace (e.g., adjusted sleeping quarters in firehouses, single-occupancy bunk rooms, changing patrol protocols), and even disrupted exercise routines can create human resource difficulties, and add new stressors to the workplace ([Katzner, 2020](#)).
4. **Increased Costs:** Healthcare, administrative changes, and cleaning of exposed vehicles may strain your available resources.

IN THIS BRIEF

- About Indirect Effects
- Examples of Indirect Effects
- Ways You Can Protect Your Organization

RELEVANT FOR



SO WHAT?

Recognizing how your organization is affected by COVID-19 will allow you to protect your resources and manage service delivery to your community.

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.

RESOURCE REFERRALS

For project news and updates:

- Visit www.start.umd.edu/COVIDFirstResponders
- Subscribe to START's newsletter at www.start.umd.edu/newsletters
- Follow us on social media with #COVIDFirstResponders

RESEARCH

Researchers at Wageningen University conducted a global survey of wildland fire professionals about service delivery and mitigation practices during the COVID-19 pandemic. Learn more about their results.

1. *Wildland Fire Management under COVID-19*

IN THE NEWS

Learn more about COVID-related indirect effects in the news:

1. *MDC asks Police in AZ to issue citations for low level misdemeanors.*
2. *SFPD closes academy after positive cases*

5. **Delayed Investigations & Programs:** For police, fewer personnel may increase the amount of time for investigations. Among police respondents, 25% report anticipated cuts in capital improvement projects ([Lum et al., 2020](#)).
6. **Training Disruptions:** Academies may be closed or slowed due to illness among recruits and staff. The need to replace staff who don't return to work for extended periods could increase training and recruitment costs. Early in the pandemic, 35% of reporting police agencies suspended their academy ([Lum et al., 2020](#)).
7. **Inefficiency in Deployment of Personnel:** As a 24/7 provider, you have personnel assigned to shifts and specific duties. If demand for services changes, you may not have the capacity available when and where you need it — resulting in some personnel doing less while others are overburdened.
8. **Public Relations:** Changes in the quality or quantity of service you provide may negatively affect your relationship with the community.

What Can You Do? Plan wisely. Recognize that it may not be possible to meet all your pre-pandemic organizational goals. You can reduce your goals to ensure you meet all your objectives in the face of increased quarantines, absenteeism, and productivity losses due to COVID-19.

Advise your community of changes to service delivery due to the pandemic. Research suggests using social media may serve as an effective channel for engaging with the public and building trust ([Laufs and Waseem, 2020](#)).



HOW YOU CAN
HELP

There are a variety of ways that you can contribute to this effort and help protect your brothers and sisters in the first responder community:

1. Participate in an online study with the START and Second Sight Team.
2. Contribute your data to the IAFC First Responders Personnel Impact Survey
3. Contribute your data to the National Police Foundation Survey on the Impact of COVID-19 on Law Enforcement Agencies.

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