

MONITOR & MITIGATE

The Impact of COVID-19 on Public Safety



COVID-19 Vaccination Information & Uptake

Vaccines

Vaccinations provide a level of protection from viruses that may otherwise cause temporary or permanent harm. For responders working the frontlines who experience high risk of exposure, vaccination is an important step in protecting their health and enabling them to continue to protect the health of the public (CDC, March 21, 2021). Findings indicate opportunities for improving vaccine uptake.

Vaccine-Related Encouragement & Information

A sizeable number of participants felt vaccination was strongly encouraged at their organizations (INT. 1403, INT. 2395, INT. 5116, INT. 5548, INT. 7639, INT. 8985, INT. 4156). Those whose organization did not actively encourage the vaccine outright tended to provide responders with informational resources.

“*I don't know if they are encouraged. I don't know if they're discouraged. I think they made it eventually really readily available. They said, here's your dates and here's an open date. And they gave a lot of information if you chose to do it.*” (INT. 3693)

Participants reported incentives were generally not promoted as a way to encourage their vaccination (INT. 6542, INT. 5116, INT. 2395). One responder who does firefighting and EMS response reported that incentives were “kind of a sore subject that we've been talking about lately. You know, why doesn't our insurance give us a discount or why doesn't the city incentivize it somehow?” (INT. 3932)

Responders reported seeking accurate information about the vaccine from resources such as the CDC, local hospitals, health departments, and their management teams (INT. 3602, INT. 5116, INT. 6542).

Social media was not seen as a reliable place to access information (INT. 1403, INT. 3602, INT. 3693, INT. 6542). One firefighter stated, “we both know that the reality is that whatever you read on social media has got about a 10 percent truth factor to it.” (INT. 5548)

IN THIS BRIEF

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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 interviews with 25 first responders representing 25 departments across approximately 16 states.



Resource Referrals

For project news and updates:

- Visit start.umd.edu/COVIDFirstResponders & second sight-ts.com/covid19-topic-dashboard
- Subscribe to START's newsletter at start.umd.edu/newsletters
- Follow us on social media with #COVIDFirstResponders

Vaccine Availability

First responders were primarily informed about vaccination availability through email. Emails contained links for registration, information about the locations and dates, and included informational resources. This made responders feel vaccination was readily available (INT. 2395, INT. 3693, INT. 3932).

Participants who reported issues with accessibility cited a lack of preparation by their local health departments and delays in qualifying for vaccination due to limited supplies (INT. 3602, INT. 5116, INT. 7639). These responders often came from rural communities (INT. 3062, INT. 5116).

Ways to Encourage Vaccine Uptake

Vaccine uptake improves the ability of frontline responders to safely support their communities by reducing their likelihood of infection and transmission to at-risk community members. There are opportunities to improve uptake among first responders through facilitated trainings and direct information sharing. Pre-determined emergency plans, established at agency, local, and state levels, are also essential to delivering vaccines to responders, managing the logistics of timely distribution, and preparing for future crises. Research shows that vaccine acceptance rates increase when first responder leadership provides education on the safety, efficacy, and benefit of vaccination, along with ensuring minimal associated costs and barriers to access ([Glaser et al., 2011](#)).

References

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021). CDC Real-World Study Confirms Protective Benefits of mRNA COVID-19 Vaccines. [CDC Real-World Study Confirms Protective Benefits of mRNA COVID-19 Vaccines | CDC Online Newsroom | CDC](#)

Glaser, M. S., Chui, S., Webber, M. P., Gustave, J., Lee, R., McLaughlin, M. T., Ortiz, V., Prezant, D., & Kelly, K. (2011). Predictors of acceptance of H1N1 influenza vaccination by FDNY firefighters and EMS workers. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.vaccine.2011.06.008>.

“*Yeah, and so they rolled it out really well. They made it super easy. They said, you know, if you want to do it, the email went out specifically to chiefs and heads of emergency services. And they came to their people and said, look, if you want the vaccine, let me know.* (INT. 4156)

“*Well, initially it was difficult, but then they opened it up to firefighters and police officers, and they just scheduled us.* (INT. 1403)



HOW TO HELP FIRST RESPONDERS

Additional Information on Vaccines

- ▶ Key Things to Know About COVID-19 Vaccines ([cdc.gov](#))
- ▶ Safety of COVID-19 Vaccines | CDC ([cdc.gov](#))
- ▶ State Strategies to Increase COVID-19 Vaccine Uptake in Rural Communities ([National Governors Association](#))
- ▶ Visit our [Covid-19 Topic Dashboard](#) for further insight into how the first responder community can be supported in the future.

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