

COVID-19

RETURNING TO WORK AFTER POSITIVE DIAGNOSIS

NEW JERSEY REGIONAL OPERATIONS & INTELLIGENCE CENTER (ROIC)
THREAT ANALYSIS UNIT ~ ROIC202004-05291T
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KEY FINDINGS

The New Jersey Regional Operations & Intelligence Center (ROIC) conducted research regarding the process necessary for successful recovery from COVID-19. This research and subsequent analysis focused on proper return-to-work procedures for first responders, while ensuring the safety of all. Although limited data is available specifically referencing first responders, numerous international scientific studies provide best practices for determining an individual's ability to safely resume their duties. Links for more information are provided throughout this report.

THE AFTERMATH OF COVID-19 INFECTION

Doctors in Hong Kong have found that people who recover after being infected with COVID-19 can be left with substantially weakened lung capacity, some gasping for air when walking at a fast pace or engaging in activities requiring elevated cardio activity. It is unknown whether these individuals had pre-existing conditions; however, gradual introduction to extensive physical activity is recognized as a best practice when re-entering the workforce.

- **Analyst Comment:** *Due to both the physical nature of the job and the inherent danger encountered when responding to calls for service, the recovery process from COVID-19 may be especially difficult to navigate for first responders. This may be a significant factor in determining fitness-for-duty and gauging when individuals should be medically cleared to return to full capacity in the workforce.*

GUIDELINES FOR DISCONTINUATION OF QUARANTINE

Many questions have arisen regarding the appropriate time for individuals to return to work following a positive COVID-19 diagnosis. A recent study from Johns Hopkins University featured in the journal *Annals of Internal Medicine* reports that 97.5 percent of people who develop COVID-19 related symptoms will do so within 11.5 days of exposure, supporting current guidance for the 14 day isolation period issued by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). The study also estimated that per 10,000 individuals isolated for 14 days roughly 101 would develop symptoms after discontinuing quarantine. For more information on this study, please refer to this link: [Johns Hopkins University](#)

GUIDELINES FOR FIRST RESPONDERS RETURNING TO WORK

Guidelines specific to first responders were posted on EMS One. This guidance provides the following and can be referenced on this link: [EMS One](#)

- Asymptomatic individuals may return to work after 14 days from exposure.
- An individual with symptoms, but a negative COVID-19 test, may have a different illness and is permitted to return to work following resolution of those symptoms.
- A symptomatic individual who tests positive for COVID-19 “needs to remain in isolation until the illness resolves and repeat testing confirms negative status.”



IMAGE SOURCE: New Jersey State Police

ASYMPTOMATIC AND PRE-SYMPTOMATIC CONDITIONS

Numerous studies have been conducted documenting COVID-19 infection in both patients who never developed symptoms of the disease (asymptomatic) and those who do not yet exhibit symptoms at the time of the test (pre-symptomatic). Due to the lack of testing of patients in both categories, this body of research is still in its infancy.

Although the risk of transmitting COVID-19 is greatest in those who are symptomatic, asymptomatic and pre-symptomatic individuals have transmitted the virus to otherwise healthy individuals. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease, recently found that between 25% and 50% of people infected with COVID-19 may never show symptoms or fall ill — but can still transmit the illness to others. This significantly increases the likelihood of transmission, as asymptomatic individuals may never be aware they have COVID-19 and may not take the same precautions as those who have tested positive for the virus. For more information, please refer to this link: [Business Insider](#)

International studies also highlight asymptomatic transmission. A study published by the journal, *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, documented roughly 12.6% of cases in China appeared to involve asymptomatic transmission.

- **Analyst Comment:** *The unpredictable nature of asymptomatic transmission has tremendous implications for law enforcement when determining deployment strategies. Single person patrol vehicles, as well as the continuous use of appropriate PPE, are considered best practices in decreasing the likelihood of asymptomatic and pre-symptomatic transmission.*

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Despite utilizing advanced diagnostic methods and best practices for containing COVID-19, many countries are bracing for a second wave of infection. Specifically, South Korea recently experienced a momentary decrease in positive cases of COVID-19 and began loosening restrictions; however, as local clusters of infection have continued to cause concern amongst the population, the nation is focused on planning for the future, brainstorming ways the country can practice "everyday distancing" that would introduce more sustainable lifestyle changes rather than temporary campaigns.

- **Analyst Comment:** *The United States has similar issues with clusters of infection, with New York City considered as the epicenter of the COVID-19 outbreak in the country. For more information, please refer to this link: [International Business Times](#)*
- **Please note:** *Although the nation began lifting certain restrictions related to reducing the spread of COVID-19, South Korean officials also recently began requiring individuals who violate stay-at-home orders to wear electronic monitoring bracelets. While this new policy has been met with adversity and criticism from human rights and legal activists, it demonstrates the drastic measures being enacted worldwide to slow the spread of COVID-19 and remain prepared for a second wave of infection.*

CONCLUSION

Comprehensive guidance regarding when first responders are safely able to return to work after a positive diagnosis is limited; however, the previously mentioned best practices from around the world provide valuable insight regarding full recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. While there are protective measures in place for when individuals re-enter the workforce, additional precautions are needed to ensure a second wave of infection does not occur. The ROIC will continue to monitor this issue as new guidance emerges.

SOURCES

Open Source Reporting, Intelligence Community Reporting

SOURCE RELIABILITY

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DISSEMINATION

Law Enforcement, Public Partners

CONTACT INFORMATION

Any questions about this product should be directed to the NJ ROIC Threat Analysis Unit at (609) 963-6900, ext. 6258 or NJROICthreat@gw.njsp.org.

SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY REPORTING

Suspicious activity with a possible nexus to terrorism should be reported to NJOHSP CTWatch at 866.4SAFENJ (866.472.3365) or tips@njohsp.gov.