



Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police

Safety and security for all Canadians through innovative police leadership

COVID-19 and policing in Canada



On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) officially declared COVID-19 a pandemic. According to the WHO, an influenza pandemic occurs when a new influenza virus emerges and spreads around the world, and most people do not have immunity.

The Public Health Agency of Canada indicates that the public health risk associated with COVID-19 is LOW. However, the agency indicates that this could change very quickly.

A pandemic has implications for both the communities you serve and the agencies you oversee. The CACP is committed to doing everything it can to help you prepare for and manage the COVID-19 situation in your jurisdiction.

Be informed

We are first responders and, as such, we can expect our communities to turn to us for guidance and support during this pandemic. Police services must maintain ongoing operations and continue to be accessible to the public. To ensure we continue to help and protect our communities, it is important for your team to understand what COVID-19 is, how it spreads, what the symptoms are, and what to expect of treatment and recovery. To help you with that, the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) has developed the [COVID-19 Information for Law Enforcement: General Fact Sheet](#) and the Canadian Police Knowledge Network is now offering the [Infectious Disease and Pandemic Preparedness online course](#) for free, for the next three months.

Plan well

An important aspect of maintaining public safety is ensuring we have the right people in the right roles when our communities need us the most. Each police agency should have a **pandemic or emergency operations plan** in place. Such a plan should identify the core department functions that must be maintained during a pandemic/emergency. If you do not have such a plan, we invite you to consult the [Canadian Pandemic Influenza Preparedness: Planning Guidance for the Health Sector](#) which also applies to police officers who are providing medical first response. Also worthy of note for guidance is the Police Executive Research Forum's [Police Planning for an Influenza Pandemic: Case Studies and Recommendations from the Field](#) and the American Federal Emergency Management Agency's [Pandemic Influenza Continuity of Operations Annex Template Instructions](#).

We also invite our members to share their pandemic/emergency operations plans on the [CACP's RF Connect portal](#) so that other agencies who have yet to develop one, or wish to review and update theirs, can learn and benefit from your experience.

Please consult the IACP [Organizational Readiness: Considerations for Preparing Your Agency for COVID-19](#) for a checklist of considerations to help your agency be as prepared as possible to deal with the potential impacts of the coronavirus on your police service.

Protect the Front-Line

We must ensure our front-line members are safe and healthy so they can do the same for the community. Police services should provide members with **Personal Protective Equipment** and implement **safety practices** to prevent the acquisition and transmission of COVID-19. Please refer to the following document by the World Health Organization regarding the [Rational use of personal protective equipment for coronavirus disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#) for guidance. The International Association of Chiefs of Police has also prepared an excellent fact sheet entitled [What Law Enforcement Personnel Need to Know about Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#).

Coordinate your Response

Police services work with other first responder partners, medical and social services personnel, government and health authorities every day. To help coordinate a partner response to COVID-19, the [Federal/Provincial/Territorial Public Health Response Plan for Biological Events](#) has been activated.

Most communities may also have some type of multiagency emergency planning group established in an attempt to coordinate and maximize available resources to stop the spread of the disease and to help care for those who have been infected. Reach out to your [local or regional health authority](#) to ensure your police service is involved and to maximize the resources that may have already been developed.

Communicate

Police services can play an important role in increasing public awareness, influencing public behaviour as well as managing fears and expectations.

The Government of Canada has created a [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) website](#) that represents an excellent one-stop-shop to access the information you may need to support your agency's internal and external communications. It includes the following:

- **COVID-19 updates:** current cases, risk to Canadians, monitoring, news and updates
- **Travel advice:** countries with travel notices, safety abroad, planning a cruise, returning travelers
- **Being prepared:** planning, prescriptions, essentials, caring for those who are ill, communication
- **Symptoms and treatment:** Symptoms, diagnosis, treatment, about coronaviruses
- **Prevention and risk:** How the virus spreads, prevention, risks of getting coronavirus
- **Canada's response:** airports, assisted departures, collaboration with provinces and territories

The World Health Organization has also produced a number of [public education resources](#) that can be used to support your communication efforts.

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