

To: Members of the MMA Workers Compensation Fund

Re: COVID-19 – IMPORTANT ****PLEASE READ****

Date: November 25, 2020

Risk Management Services is becoming increasingly concerned about the number of reported claims from our members related to COVID-19 exposures. Most recently, the exposures have been a result of working within close proximity and **NOT** wearing masks, mostly in locations where employees congregate, including fire stations, police stations, shared vehicles and training. It's important to remember that if employees are asymptomatic, they could unknowingly be a risk to other employees, family members and the public at large. It is important to remind staff that they should not report to work if they have a fever or feel ill. As you are all aware, Maine is seeing an increase in infections and we fear a bit of COVID fatigue.

The majority of the **positive** claims we are seeing are not from patient care or contact with members of the public, but from employee to employee transmission, which is why it is so important to be wearing a mask at your place of employment, at a training and when interacting with the public.

We have had very few positive claims stemming from a municipal worker providing direct care to a known positive patient. Unfortunately we are seeing some positive cases from employee to employee exposure due to not following CDC recommendations. We encourage you to be as vigilant with proper safeguards while in the office or other work environments as you are when providing patient care or interacting with the public.

Social distancing, where possible, and consistent use of the proper PPE are the best defense. If close contact needs to be made with someone, use of full PPE and limiting the number of staff required for the contact will reduce risk.

Offices should be set up so that social distancing can take place, masks worn when unable to social distance, and all contact kept to a minimum, even among staff. This is a good time to revisit COVID-19 workplace safety guidelines with your staff. The State of Maine has guidance as noted below, we strongly encourage you review them.

Staff should follow all CDC guidelines, below are links related to public safety employees:

<https://www.maine.gov/decd/checklists/public-and-community-buildings>

<https://www.maine.gov/decd/covid-19-prevention-checklists>

- we encourage you review the *Guidance on Enforcing Face Coverings Rules in Public Settings* (released Nov 23, 2020) and the Mask – FAQ's

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-law-enforcement.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/firefighter-EMS.html>

During the pandemic we have seen cases that involved unplanned and unexpected contact. This is the nature of the job and public safety employees can't always plan for when they may come into close contact with someone. For this reason, masks should always be at the ready and worn when there is any chance of coming into close contact with any other person, even other employees. Face/eye protection and gloves should always be available. We strongly encourage all members of the MMA Workers Compensation Fund require masks in areas where employees congregate and are unable to social distance.

Be safe and help keep others safe.