

COVID-19 Best Practice Information: Healthcare Worker and Responder Safety

Background

- The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has demonstrated a need for healthcare worker and first responder home isolation solutions to prevent the further spread of the virus. Potential sheltering solutions include hotels, home rentals, and recreational vehicles (RVs).
- The following is a list of key findings and considerations for jurisdictions and communities regarding ongoing COVID-19 operations across the country. These are best practices for consideration and do not constitute and should not be considered as guidance in any way.

Key Considerations

- With the ability to accommodate large numbers of individuals, hotels can be converted into precautionary isolation shelters for healthcare workers and first responders who may be regularly exposed to COVID-19.
 - Guidance for additional considerations on essential services and hotel set-up can be found in Appendices C and H of the Alternate Care Site [Toolkit](#).
- While practicing self-isolation, healthcare workers and responder personnel are required to monitor themselves for COVID-19 symptoms and report updates to their local public health authority and their place of employment.
 - Guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) intended to assist with assessment of risk, monitoring, and work restriction decisions for health care personnel with potential exposure to COVID-19 can be found [here](#).¹

¹ 2020 CDC, Interim U.S. Guidance for Risk Assessment and Public Health Management of Healthcare Personnel with Potential Exposure in a Healthcare Setting to Patients with Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-risk-assesment-hcp.html>



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Lessons Learned Related to Healthcare Worker and Responder Safety

Healthcare Worker and Responder Housing

- **Potential Best Practice:** Globally, hotels are being used to isolate uninfected health workers and vulnerable populations. In Wuhan, China,² hotels housed health workers who regularly encountered infected patients to prevent potential spread during their commute to work or return to their households. A European hospitality company offered 40 hotels in France for vulnerable populations and health workers. Two hotels in the United Kingdom are housing National Health Service (NHS) staff at no cost.³
- **Potential Best Practice:** Airbnb announced a global housing initiative to provide housing for 100,000 healthcare professionals, relief workers, and first responders. Airbnb will waive all associated fees.⁴ French and Italian pilot programs have resulted in nearly 6,000 hosts offering their homes.
- **Potential Best Practice:** Hotels in multiple cities across the U.S. have offered rooms and meals, to first responders to prevent potential contagion in responders' households.⁵ An entire hotel in Seattle, Washington was booked to house first responders and other essential city employees who have been exposed to COVID-19 and are unable to isolate at home.⁶
- **Potential Best Practice:** A Facebook group, "RVs for MDs", helps match RV owners with healthcare workers who are concerned about exposing COVID-19 to their families when returning home from work.⁷
- **Potential Best Practice:** The University of New Haven provided on-campus housing to New Haven's police officers, firefighters, and 9-1-1 Call Center staff. Residence halls opened to first responders who lived far away, had an ill family member, or were awaiting test results after exposure to COVID-19.⁸
- **Strength:** The American Hotel & Lodging Association launched its Hospitality for Hope initiative, a national database that lists vacant hotel and motel properties that can serve as temporary housing for first responders.⁵
- **Strength:** Airbnb partnered with International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the International Rescue Committee, International Medical Corps, and other nonprofit organizations to provide support to relief workers.⁴

² This document contains references and links to non-federal resources and organizations. This information is meant solely for informational purposes and is not intended to be an endorsement of any non-federal entity by FEMA, U.S. Department of Homeland Security or the U.S. government.

³ 2020 CNN, Today's hotel is tomorrow's coronavirus hospital, <https://www.cnn.com/travel/article/hotels-turned-hospitals-coronavirus/index.html>

⁴ 2020 Airbnb, Hosts to Help Provide Housing to 100,000 COVID-19 Responders, <https://news.airbnb.com/airbnb-to-help-provide-housing-to-100000-covid-19-responders/>

⁵ 2020 USA Today, Empty buildings across US now housing coronavirus patients, the homeless and first responders, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2020/04/06/coronavirus-patients-first-responders-housed-hotels-stadiums/2945808001/>

⁶ 2020 EMS1, Seattle books entire hotel for first responder quarantine and isolation, <https://www.ems1.com/ems-products/personal-protective-equipment-ppe/articles/seattle-books-entire-hotel-for-first-responder-quarantine-and-isolation-UUirjZ2D3r5u0Rd2/>

⁷ 2020 CNN, A Facebook group matches RVs that are sitting idle with health care workers who need a place to isolate after long hospital shifts, <https://www.cnn.com/2020/04/01/us/coronavirus-rvs-4-mds-healthcare-isolate-trnd/index.html>

⁸ 2020 University of New Haven, University of New Haven Supports First Responders During Coronavirus Pandemic, <https://www.newhaven.edu/news/releases/2020/first-responders-residence-halls.php>

Decontamination Process

- **Potential Best Practice:** After transporting a person under investigation (PUI) or patient with a confirmed case of COVID-19, emergency medical services (EMS) personnel should ensure that the EMS transport vehicle has been thoroughly disinfected and ventilated. The CDC has released guidance for EMS [here](#).⁹
 - Local health departments across the country have started implementing EMS decontamination strategies.
 - In Pennsylvania, a private business has offered free decontamination services to first responder vehicles in the area.¹⁰

Topics for the “Best Practices” series are generated from crowd sourced suggestions. Have an idea? Let us research it! Organizations and individuals can e-mail best practices or lessons learned to fema-cipsupport@fema.dhs.gov.

⁹ 2020 CDC, Summary of Key Changes for EMS Guidance, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-for-ems.html>

¹⁰ 2020 CBS21, Decontamination services offered free to first responder vehicles across Central Pa., <https://local21news.com/news/local/decontamination-services-offered-free-to-first-responder-vehicles-across-central-pa>