To: EMS Clinicians

From: Theodore Delbridge, MD, MPH
        Executive Director

        Timothy Chizmar, MD
        State EMS Medical Director

Date: January 15, 2025

Re: **Respiratory Virus Season & Masks / Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

We are writing to provide a brief update on respiratory viruses in Maryland, and to remind EMS clinicians of recommendations for PPE. Maryland's weekly respiratory virus-associated hospitalization rate currently exceeds 10 hospital admissions per 100,000 residents due to increasing COVID, influenza, and RSV infections.

Therefore, we advise all EMS clinicians to implement the following measures to reduce the risk of virus transmission:

- Employ universal face mask use for all clinicians and patients during care encounters.
- Utilize PPE including a fit-tested N-95 mask (EMS clinicians only), eye protection and gloves for suspected COVID infection.
- Remember to don appropriate PPE prior to performing airway procedures.
- Gowns should be utilized if there is anticipated contact with secretions or body fluids.
- Remember to wash your hands frequently or use hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available.
- Practice appropriate doffing (removal of PPE) to avoid contamination
- Disinfect equipment used for patient care (e.g. cots, monitors)

In addition to these guidelines, EMS clinicians should continue to exercise good judgment based upon their infection prevention training.

Please note that various health care facilities now require masks upon entry to their buildings. Please respect their requests for masks while in these facilities. Masks may be required in other settings by individual fire and EMS departments; please consult your supervisor or chief for information on local policies.

Please contact the Office of the Medical Director (410-706-0880; tchizmar@miemss.org) if you have any questions regarding this memo.