



July 30, 2021

King County EMS: Updated COVID-19 Exposure, Quarantine, and Isolation Algorithm

Background: The prevalence of COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) continues to increase in King County as a consequence of the emergence of the highly infectious delta variant. The large majority of new infections, hospitalizations, and deaths occur among unvaccinated persons. Nonetheless no vaccine is perfect (the current vaccines are ~90% effective), so we are updating the algorithm for screening and surveillance for EMS in King County. The updated algorithm has been reviewed and approved by King County Public Health leadership and is consistent with the recent updates from the CDC.

In summary, any EMS provider who experiences a COVID exposure regardless of their vaccination status should undergo serial surveillance testing typically early after the exposure is recognized and then at day 7 following the exposure. Vaccinated persons do NOT need to quarantine so long as they remain asymptomatic. Unvaccinated persons must still quarantine. Importantly, there is now good evidence that the POCCT can be used to screen asymptomatic persons following an exposure so that a PCR test is only required for a symptomatic person or a person who has a positive POCCT result.

Vaccination is the best strategy to protect ourselves, coworkers, and the patients and community we pledge to serve. The vaccination is safe and remarkably effective. The benefits of the vaccination even for young healthy persons far outweigh the risks especially when we consider the acute and convalescent consequences caused by COVID infection.

Please refer to the updated algorithm for specific scenarios. Red font highlights the updates.

Thank you for your service and leadership.

Tom Rea MD
Medical Program Director
King County EMS

Michael Sayre MD
Medical Director
Seattle Fire Department