



August 30, 2021

KCEMS MPD Message regarding COVID-19 Vaccination

The EMS providers in King County are a remarkable group who distinguish themselves through their service, compassion, resilience, and innovation. The regional King County EMS physician leadership have great respect for what EMS can and does accomplish. Whether it be cardiac arrest resuscitation, expert assessment and triage of stroke, multifaceted management of complex trauma, or the clear decision-making and precise action for anaphylaxis, there is a synergy between operational excellence and medical understanding. These are everyday examples where “routine” EMS efforts here in King County define excellence and ultimately elevate our public’s health. Collectively, EMS stakeholders serve the community through their sacrifice and commitment to their local communities. This commitment to improve public health has collectively benefitted neighbors, family, and friends – the connections are real and almost all of us know someone who can tell this story.

We again need to emphasize our tested experience and pledge to safeguard and improve the public’s health. To achieve this goal, I am asking that you consider making another personal sacrifice and receive vaccination against SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19). The delta variant has quickly gained traction and the infection is taking an immense health toll. The reality is that transmission occurs unknowingly despite best intentions by all involved to mask, social distance, get tested, and generally apply basic common sense. COVID-19 is an accelerating community challenge, seemingly taking advantage of inconsistencies in our efforts to overcome the pandemic.

The most powerful strategy to serve and protect the public’s health is for the EMS workforce to achieve comprehensive vaccination. Updated information about the vaccine now provides for full approval by the FDA. With this approval, the COVID vaccination joins the ranks of vaccinations against the measles, mumps, tetanus, and diphtheria for example – vaccines that we all accept because they demonstrate exceptional safety and strong health benefit for the individual and for the public’s health.

I appreciate this is a personal decision, and we are increasingly aware that the decision has important implications for those we care for, as well as colleagues, family, and friends. The decision to proceed with vaccination also requires trust; a trust that those providing such guidance – myself in particular - have considered the risks and benefits of the vaccine. As the King County EMS Medical Program Director, I can assure you that I am committed to common sense *and* medical science in order to support you, the EMS system, and the public’s health in making this recommendation.

Excellence is often only achieved when there is teamwork that enables the collective to outperform the sum of its parts. We again need this collective teamwork for an unconventional but formidable challenge to our region’s public health caused by COVID. I again acknowledge the request is an important one and I make myself available to any and all who have questions or discussion as you consider vaccination.

Tom Rea MD

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