



## OEC COURSE DELIVERY GUIDELINES FOR THE COVID-19 ERA August 2020

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The following guidelines for OEC courses are suggestions from the National OEC Program Committee, made in the interest of safety in the delivery of all OEC related courses during the COVID-19 pandemic. The guidelines may change as the pandemic evolves. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends four distinct activities for minimizing the spread of this disease:

- Maintain good personal hygiene; wash your hands frequently.
- Maintain a two-meter distance from people who are not in your household.
- Wear masks in public, especially where it is difficult to maintain physical distance.
- Stay at home if you are sick.

In addition, four principles are being used for controlling the further spread of COVID-19. These principles are being used during state and local government reopening from STAY AT HOME ORDERS. They are being applied to businesses and organizations and in some cases require additional paperwork that will need to be completed for any training activities. With COVID-19 all state and local requirements need to be followed closely. These pillars include:

- Social Distancing
- Hygiene Protocols
- Staffing and Operations
- Cleaning and Disinfecting

In the context of OEC courses, additional specifics apply.

### **1. Follow the rules.**

Any OEC course must comply with all local, state, and federal rules and mandates related to COVID-19. The course must also conform to any additional NSP guidelines; see updated guidelines at the link listed below.

As with all NSP courses, all participants must read and sign the most up-to-date NSP training release form, available on the NSP website at Member Resources > Instructor Resources.

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on training programs within the NSP system. OEC training that has been affected includes OEC Refreshers, OEC classes both full and challenge courses, the requirements for CPR demonstration annually, Instructor mentoring, Instructor review for recertification, OEC Module of the Senior Program training for patrollers as well as trainer/evaluators. Outdoor First Care, OEC Enhancement Seminars and the First Aid Module of the Senior Program will be likewise impacted.

CPR recertification is a required course to maintain OEC certification. If your CPR card expires reach out to the agency provider and use their guidance on how to complete recertification. The initial extensions of card expirations have been lifted and several agencies are now requiring classes to be taken. Based on the special circumstances around the COVID-19 pandemic and requirements for social distancing, for the 2020 – 2021 season, NSP patrollers will not be required to complete the annual CPR skills demonstration.

Additional information referenced in sites below such as the American Heart Association COVID-19 reference page and the ACS COT Guidance for STOP THE BLEED Course Instructors provides other suggestions and ideas that can be used while developing local guidelines.

## **2. Allow for social distancing.**

- Evidence suggests that lengthy indoor gatherings expose people to larger viral loads than brief indoor gatherings or outdoor gatherings. For this reason, consider holding as many of the in-person class meetings as possible outdoors. Outdoor meetings in warm months are preferable to indoor meetings in cold months. Questions to ask include how far apart can people stay and what is the gathering limit allowed?
- Recent events with large outdoor crowds with people not wearing face coverings have caused concern for increased spread of the COVID-19 virus. Face coverings or masks must be worn outdoors as well, and in most cases should be worn even if 6 feet can be maintained between people.
- Whenever feasible, use internet-mediated facilities such as Zoom WebEx, or other media in place of indoor course meetings.
- For indoor, in-person meetings, seek well-ventilated spaces (air exchange is preferred vs air movement), and plan for short interactions with frequent breaks. Do not schedule in-person, indoor gatherings involving more people than federal, state, local, and NSP guidelines, if any, permit or recommend.
- Minimize physical contact among participants. Ensure that participants, indoors or outdoors, remain physically separated, by at least 6 feet (roughly 2 meters).
- During in-person, indoor gatherings, require all participants—instructors and students—to wear face coverings or masks. Ask students to agree to this protocol before the course starts.
- In many cases, instructors may be able to replace traditional classroom presentations with well-designed, hands-on exercises that participants can conduct on their own, documenting their outcomes electronically. Examples might include having one family group video tape a skill session and have others use the OEC textbook and verify the steps that were completed in detail order. Feedback would provide guidance on good skill activities and those that need to be improved upon.
- Consider the use of manikins or other equipment that can be easily cleaned for use by others. An example would be to follow the CPR manikin practical protocols from training agencies. Cleaning and disinfecting can be done following CDC guidance and EPA registered cleaners.
- Consider how you will group students and instructors together, such as the use of a POD where no more than 4 students and an instructor work together during the class to limit exposure.

## **3. Adopt safe hygiene protocols and self certification.**

- Instructors should notify participants of the requirement to self-certify to the fact that they are not known to have any Covid-19 related symptoms or known exposures, prior to the class starting. Self-certification may begin as early as two weeks before the start of the course for planning purposes, and again immediately prior to the participant (anyone involved in the training must self-certify) arriving at the start of each day of the course. Screening should include a written questionnaire with at least the following questions and signatures:

<b>SELF CERTIFICATION FORM (to be completed prior to each days class at a minimum)</b>	
Have you had signs of a fever or a measured temperature above 100.3 degrees or greater, a cough, or trouble breathing within the last 24 hours? The CDC has updated the symptoms list to also include chills, repeating shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat and new loss of taste or smell. YES OF NO CIRCLE ANSWER	
Have you had close contact with an individual diagnosed with COVID-19? YES OR NO CIRCLE ANSWER Close contact means: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Living in the same household as a person who has tested positive for COVID-19</li> <li>• Caring for a person who has tested positive for COVID-19</li> <li>• Being within 6 feet of a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 for about 15 minutes</li> <li>• Coming in direct contact with secretions (e.g. sharing utensils or being coughed on) from a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, while that person was symptomatic</li> </ul>	
Have you been asked to self-isolate or quarantine by your doctor or local public health official? YES OR NO CIRCLE ANSWER	
<b>Action</b>	
If the answer is YES to any of the above questions, you (the participant) are required to immediately leave the training session, contact your primary care doctor if symptomatic, and remain out of work for 14 days or until instructed to return by your physician.	
<b>Certification</b>	
Patrol Name:	
Name of Individual self-certifying and if a minor the name of the minor:	
Instructor of Record name:	
Instructor Trainer name for course:	Date:

Any participant—instructor or student—who answers yes to any of these questions or who is sick with any contagious illness must not participate in any in-person session, indoors or outdoors. A full sample questionnaire is attached.

- Spend time at the beginning of the course explicitly reviewing pandemic-related protocols, to promote students' confidence in the course and their willingness to adhere to the procedures.
- Set a good example: Follow the protocols that you have established and make note of them as you do.
- If your course involves student fees, it is a good idea to advertise full refunds in cases where registered participants do not attend because of illness. This policy reduces incentives for people to participate when they are sick.
- Handwashing is one of the single most important principles for preventing the spread of COVID-19. Handwashing for at least 20 seconds with warm/hot water and soap is the preferred method of infection control for hands. Sanitizing liquids or gels are also usable if they contain at least 60% ethanol or 70% isopropyl alcohol. They should also be rubbed into the surface until dry or approximately 20-30 seconds. Either handwashing or sanitizing stations must be available at all training activities.
- Any common touch surfaces should be cleaned with a bleach and water solution as outlined by the CDC (1/3 cup of bleach to 1 gallon of water see CDC) or an EPA approved cleaning agent for Coronavirus.
- Surfaces such as manikins, tabletops, etc. should be cleaned and disinfected between training stations or at the end of written testing.
- Face coverings that can be washed should be cleaned at the end of each day. Others that are disposable should be replaced at the end of each training day. CDC recommended hygiene practices that should be followed by all people involved in training.
- All participants involved should remember to avoid touching the outside of their mask and touching their face or eyes whether wearing gloves or not.

#### 4. Staffing and operations: Add pandemic safety to the standard field-session safety measures.

- Research with COVID-19 has identified that asymptomatic individuals can be carriers and infect others while never showing any additional symptoms therefore it is important to take every necessary precaution for the instructor of record and others to prevent unnecessary exposure and perform all social distancing, hygiene, staffing and operations, and cleaning and disinfecting.
- This applies to how testing areas are set up to maintain gathering goals as established by CDC, State or local authorities. Questions to ask, how small can I make my groups? Can I stay within the established gathering limit?
- Consider keeping activities flexible and rotating people into the site to maintain limits, using patients from the family unit of the candidate or changing patients often to reduce exposure times should be considered. Limiting to one evaluator at each station and keeping all visitors away from the testing area.
- Parents of young adult patrollers or patients that are being used on site can stay at the location but should be kept within eyesight but further away from the gathering area. Adults must be allowed to complete self-certification forms of participants (minors) who are not able to sign for themselves.
- For all operations including testing the following protocol should be used by OEC technicians who are practicing or testing with in person skills.
  - Introduce self while approaching but greater than 6 feet away from the injured person and while already wearing face mask/covering, and safety glasses.
  - Ask specific questions about past medical history as it relates to potential exposure to COVID-19 or active COVID-19 symptoms.
  - Once you have determined that the threat of COVID-19 exposure is minimal and prior to getting within 6 feet ask that the patient put on a face covering. If they do not have one provide a disposable face mask for them to put in place, providing there is not a contraindication with compromising the airway, or causing additional harm from a potential spinal injury. Ensure that proper gloves and all PPE is in place prior for practice exercises to get use to working with the equipment on a scene.
  - When others come to the scene they must be informed of the findings of the patient medical history as it relates to COVID-19.
  - Communication with base and EMS should include any concerns about COVID-19 with the health of the injured person.
  - Cleaning post training must be thorough with the use of EPA registered or recommended COVID-19 materials.
  - When training is completed a review should be done with the Instructor Trainer and IOR to discuss what changes can be considered in the future.
- Transportation to and from field sessions should adhere to all distancing guidelines. A good rule for vehicle travel is to require participants to provide their own transportation to the training session. Try to limit vehicles on site to no more than one household per vehicle.
- To the extent possible, use outdoor recreation areas close to home and follow any rules established by that facility that are more stringent.
- In certain outdoor activities that include heavy aerobic activities, face coverings get wet with exhaled aerosols and are therefore potentially hazardous. If greater than 6 feet (2 meters) is being maintained face coverings or masks may be removed to prevent further hazard to the rescuer. But participants must keep protective face coverings readily available and wear them during low-intensity activities, when passing other parties, when stopping for rests, or whenever separation of two meters or more is not feasible.
- Food should not be provided by the training team. Each individual should be encouraged to bring their own food and water for what is needed during the training day.

## 5. Cleaning and disinfecting.

- Each participant (or household) must carry and use his or her own personal first-aid supplies. Refrain from using other people's supplies. Equipment should be cleaned and disinfected
- Use personal protective equipment (gloves, eye protection, masks) whenever administering first aid.
- As with all NSP training sessions, instructors must have, in advance of any course, an appropriate plan for participants who might begin to exhibit signs or symptoms of COVID-19 related illness, during a training session. This should include plans to immediately send the individual home or to a health care professional where they can be treated, tested and contact traced. Notification to authorities should follow all state and local guidelines and the owner of the facility should be notified for proper cleaning and disinfecting of the area if necessary.
- Group instruction in hands-on activities where multiple people need to touch the same equipment during a scenario poses additional challenges. The following recommendations might be considered:
  - All participants including people setting up the stations should wear nitrile gloves only or vinyl gloves over work gloves if possible. Protective eyewear (such as safety glasses, face shields, tight fitting sunglasses, or goggles) and masks should be worn when teaching aerosol generating procedures. Instructors should include larger sizes of vinyl or nitrile gloves and disinfecting wipes if possible to clean between sessions.
  - After each training session, each participant should remove and dispose of the protective gloves using procedures consistent with *Outdoor Emergency Care*, 6<sup>th</sup> edition, then wash their hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer. Instructors should include hand sanitizer at each station for everyone to use after completing a station.
  - During training sessions, suggest teaching and practicing station activities in less than 10-15 minutes intervals. This gives people a chance to separate space between skill practice sessions.

## 6. Other notes or thoughts.

- When deciding to offer a course, the IOR needs to consider if the instructor resources will be available. Consideration must be given to higher risk individuals that may be exposed to an asymptomatic individual during training activities. This risk needs to be considered for all high-risk individuals (see CDC guidelines on who is considered high risk) and the option left to those individuals.
- Consideration should be given to careful documentation of who is training or participating together during each class session. This will help support contact tracing moving forward if necessary.
- Follow up after a training session should be considered specifically looking at what lessons were learned and what can be shared.
- Consideration should be given to providing written information (CDC, WHO, State or Local requirements) up front and having a specific COVID-19 prevention discussion with all participants prior to starting the class.
- Additional course offerings are being worked on at the National level to help alleviate some of the instructor required training activities.
- IOR should ensure that if any documentation is required by regulatory agencies on how your classes are being put together as it relates to COVID-19 protocols please do so in advance.

## References

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Coronavirus (Covid-19) <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>, retrieved 13 June 2020.

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