



County of San Diego

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EMS MEDICAL DIRECTOR URGES CONTINUED PROTECTIVE MEASURES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Vaccination is a vital intervention to control the pandemic, and it is exciting to see our EMS personnel contributing to the immunization campaign. We are pleased that our frontline EMS providers received prioritized access to the vaccine, and applaud your willingness to roll up your sleeves. The vaccines are both safe and effective. I strongly encourage every eligible EMS provider to receive the vaccine. Please review the COVID-19 Vaccine Frequently Asked Questions on the [County EMS](#) and [coronavirus-sd.com](#) webpages for additional information.

While vaccination will eventually lead us out of the pandemic, until herd immunity is achieved, it is essential to continue adhering to basic public health measures to curb the spread. These non-pharmaceutical interventions include masking and social distancing. Masking remains important particularly because of the new viral variants that have emerged, some of which have already been detected in San Diego County. These variants appear to be more transmissible, leading to increased viral spread. The COVID-19 pandemic remains a grave threat to San Diego's first responder and healthcare resources.

Some experts have suggested that medical-grade masks are more effective than cloth facial coverings, particularly with the emergence of new, highly-transmissible viral variants. Remember that asymptomatic/pre-symptomatic transmissions occur in a large number of cases, and many people are unable to identify the source of their infection. In order to protect yourself, your coworkers, and your household members, if you have access to surgical masks or N-95 respirators/equivalent, wear them instead of cloth facial coverings. This is especially important while in enclosed spaces, like fire stations and dispatch centers.

We continue to encourage EMS providers to exercise extra diligence to their health and safety, both on- and off-duty. Practice the "3Ws": **(1) Wash your hands, (2) Wear your mask, and (3) Walk away (maintain at least 6 feet from others)**. While we see some signs of improvement in the pandemic, case numbers remain high, and could increase, leading to future surges. Your actions can help mitigate this real and ongoing threat. Your patients, families, and the entire community are depending on you.

The pandemic is not over. Please don't let your guard down.

Respectfully,

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cc: Nick Yphantides, MD, MPH, Chief Medical Officer
Andrew Parr, EMS Administrator