



CONTRA COSTA COUNTY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CON FIRE ANNOUNCES COVID-19 TEST RESULTS, AFFIRMS PATIENT/CREW INFECTION SAFETY PROTOCOLS AND PROCEDURES

Operations Remain Unaffected, Protective Equipment Protocols and Other Procedures in Place to Protect EMS Patients and Crews from Inadvertent Infection Risks

CONCORD, CALIF., March 25, 2020 – Contra Costa County Fire Protection District (Con Fire) today announced results of Coronavirus (COVID-19) testing of its personnel along with protocols and procedures in place since early March designed to protect both patients and crews from the risk of inadvertent infection during emergency medical responses.

Currently, based on having exhibited symptoms – including but not limited to fever, cough, sore throat and other flu-like symptoms – a total of 18 Con Fire employees have been tested for the Coronavirus. Of these, 12 have been confirmed as negative, two are isolated off duty awaiting test results, and four are positive, off duty and awaiting a return date based on current published guidelines from the CDC. The four employees testing positive represent approximately one percent of the Con Fire workforce and have had no adverse impact on operational staffing.

Early in the crisis, Con Fire established enhanced personal protective equipment (PPE) protocols to provide maximum safety for fire and ambulance crews and the patients they treat and transport. Enhanced PPE protocols are based on CDC guidelines and include mandatory use of respirators, gloves, medical gowns and eye protection for any interactions with patients exhibiting symptoms or other warning signs for possible risk of infection.

“Con Fire is committed to continuing our ability to deliver emergency services to the communities we serve throughout the duration of this evolving health crisis,” said Fire Chief Lewis T. Broschard III, Contra Costa County Fire Protection District. “Critical to continuity of our operations is the ability to protect our crews, and the patients they serve, from inadvertent infection transfer. We are confident the actions we have taken are doing just that and eliminating to the maximum extent possible risk of infection transfer.”

1 – 1 – 1

CON FIRE ANNOUNCES COVID-19 TEST RESULTS, AFFIRMS SAFETY/2-2-2

“The COVID-19-related medical dispatch questions, personal protective equipment protocols, and on-scene treatment procedures we have put in place since the early days of this health crisis are proving effective deterrents to the spread of the virus during emergency medical responses,” said Peter Benson M.D, Fire District Medical Director. “It is very understandable for the patients we treat to have many concerns about exposure to the Coronavirus but, in our view, treatment by well-protected first responders should not be one of those concerns.”

Since the onset of community spread of the virus, the possibility of infection exposure exists in virtually every aspect of our daily lives. While there likely will never be a way to determine exactly where and when an exposure occurred, Con Fire’s Coronavirus safety protocols and procedures are based on CDC guidelines and have been developed, implemented and are continually monitored by the Fire District Medical Director. They are consistent with best practices published by local, state and federal governments and are intended to essentially eliminate the likelihood of any exposure during emergency medical service treatments.

In addition to PPE enhancements, Con Fire has also established Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) procedures for questioning 911 callers about patient health and possible COVID-19 infection risks. First responders are then informed of any risks while en route to incidents and advised to implement protective equipment and other precautions to prevent inadvertent infection transfer. Additionally, callers may be asked to have the patient move outside, if able, in order to reduce the opportunity for first responders to be exposed inside the home.

Con Fire employees testing positive for the virus remain isolated off work and monitor themselves on an ongoing basis to ensure they receive proper medical care, if needed. Similarly, employees on duty who experience any symptoms of illness are immediately directed to self-isolate and are further assessed for the need for testing and/or medical treatment. Employees with negative test results remain self-isolated until their symptoms subside and they can return to work, consistent with current CDC guidelines.

#

About Contra Costa County Fire Protection District (Con Fire) -- A recognized fire service leader - Con Fire provides fire and emergency medical services to more than a million people across its 304 square-mile District area, and through mutual aid, in and around the 20 cities and unincorporated communities of Contra Costa County, California. With few exceptions, county emergency ambulance transport services are provided by Con Fire through its unique sub-contractor Alliance model across the District and beyond to include some 520 square miles of the county. In 2018, the District responded to nearly 75,000 fire and EMS emergencies and dispatched some 95,000 ambulances, providing expert medical care on more than 74,000 ambulance transports. The District, with 26 fire stations and more than 400 employees, is dedicated to preserving life, property and the environment.

Media Contact: Steve Hill, Public Information Officer, Contra Costa County Fire Protection District, (925) 941-3300, Ext. 1203 (Office), (925) 532-6512 (Mobile)