March 19, 2020

COVID-19: EMS RESPONSE AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC

As we continue to monitor the COVID-19 situation, the Santa Barbara County Department of Public Health (SBCPHD) and Santa Barbara County Emergency Medical Services Agency (SBCEMSA) would like to share some information regarding Emergency Medical Services (EMS) response with you. We are continuously working with our EMS providers to provide uninterrupted, safe, compassionate, and clinically excellent care to all of our patients while maintaining safe practices in the prehospital, and community setting. Below are some of the newly implemented screening, safety, and prevention measures our pre-hospital providers are enacting to further prevent the spread of coronavirus, whilst maintaining a healthy community and workforce.

Calling 9-1-1
Within Santa Barbara County, if you contact 9-1-1, you will be asked a series of standardized questions in order to better assist you during your emergency. Standardized questions include obtaining critical information such as the address of the emergency, a good contact/call-back phone number, and the nature of your emergency. Santa Barbara County is mitigating the spread of COVID-19 by adding additional questions to better assess, and protect, both the public and EMS personnel.

When EMS Responders Arrive
When EMS personnel arrive at your location, you may see them wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) including gloves, eye protection, a mask, or a gown. They may distance themselves physically to reduce unnecessary exposure risks and may request that you wear a mask as well. None of these measures will reduce the level of care they provide or limit their ability to provide lifesaving actions. In order to protect patients, first responders and the community by mitigating the spread of COVID-19 family members will not be allowed to accompany patients in the ambulance (exceptions may be made for parents of young children).

Disinfecting
Per standard operating procedures, ambulances are decontaminated after every patient transport using an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved disinfectant.

Use 9-1-1 for Emergencies Only
As a reminder, 9-1-1 (for emergency medical purposes) should be reserved for life-threatening emergencies, which include uncontrolled bleeding, unconsciousness, cardiac arrest, difficulty breathing, trauma, or suspected stroke symptoms.

Additional Resources
For additional information on COVID-19 please visit:

- Santa Barbara County Public Health Department: COVID-19 Information
- Center for Disease Control (CDC)