



COVID-19

This is an order of the Chief Officer.

FIRE SERVICE OPERATIONS ARE INHERENTLY HAZARDOUS THEREFORE ALL PERSONNEL MUST BE AWARE OF THE NEED TO MAINTAIN WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY STANDARDS.

Printed versions of this document may have been superseded. Refer to Members Only Website (MOW) for most current version.

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1. Background

Firefighters cannot work from home and must work in teams to safely respond to fires, rescues and other emergencies. We must protect the health and safety of our firefighters as a priority in order to continue to provide our services for the community.

It is imperative that these services are not compromised especially when there is already a large amount of fear in the community. It is important to note that as this crisis evolves, so too may our approach, if necessary this document will be updated accordingly.

Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness caused by a virus, causing symptoms including fever, cough and shortness of breath to mild pneumonia.

The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person, and possibly through contact with infected surfaces or objects, through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

2. Purpose

This policy has been formulated following the expert advice of the Commonwealth Department of Health, SA Health and the South Australian Commissioner for Public Sector Employment.

The MFS has adopted the globally recognised strategy of endeavouring to flatten the curve of Corona Virus contamination rather than trying to totally prevent the spread of the disease in our staff. This will reduce the severity of the impact on the South Australian health system as well as our ability to resource our emergency response capability.

This policy outlines principles to assist with this strategy.

3. Persons Affected

This policy applies to all MFS staff.

4. Policy

- 4.1 The MFS will provide timely and accurate information to our staff to reduce fear and assist with decision making.
- 4.2 It is expected that staff will adopt the hygiene practices recommended by our health experts to reduce infection of themselves and others.
- 4.3 To reduce exposure to communicable diseases the MFS will endeavour to maintain small worksites wherever possible. Staff should take a proactive approach to infection control and social distancing by placing a 'protective bubble' around their respective worksites to avoid cross contamination with others as much as possible. Accordingly, all unnecessary contact with the community is suspended until further notice.
- 4.4 For day working staff, flexible working arrangements will be expanded and ICT solutions expedited to maintain business continuity, with a priority of protecting the health and safety of our workforce.
- 4.5 It is expected that staff will take responsibility for honestly declaring the need to isolate themselves from their worksite where necessary by notifying their supervisor and conscientiously return to work in line with advice from our health experts.
- 4.6 The MFS will align our decisions to SA Government directives and Public Sector workforce information, but will ensure any changes to working conditions or practices will be in consultation with the United Firefighters Union and will be only for the duration of the declared medical emergency.
- 4.7 The MFS will make all reasonable and practicable endeavours necessary to continue to provide emergency response to the South Australian community.

5. References

- 5.1 Department of Health www.health.gov.au
- 5.2 South Australian Health www.sahealth.sa.gov.au
- 5.3 Commissioner for Public Sector Employment <https://publicsector.sa.gov.au/>