



**BROWARD SHERIFF'S OFFICE
DEPARTMENT OF FIRE RESCUE
AND EMERGENCY SERVICES**



SAFETY ADVISORY TOPIC

SA 13-02

**SAFETY
ADVISORY**

Division of EMS

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**CAD ZONE: ALL BROWARD COUNTY FIRE RESCUE DEPARTMENTS
DISTRICT:
DATE: 05/29/2013
RE: ALABAMA RESPIRATORY ILLNESS CLUSTER**

There has been increased news coverage concerning the cluster of patients who have become ill in southeast Alabama. Two patients have died and several others remain ill. All of the patients suffered from fever, cough and shortness of breath and all of the severe patients were positive for pneumonia. Testing has confirmed that the patients had flu strains mixed with the common cold and co-morbid factors. Currently, there are no reported cases of this illness in the State of Florida.

Symptoms of the flu can include;

A fever of 100°F or higher	A cough and/or sore throat	Nasal congestion with or without discharge
Chills/Shivering	Headache and/or body aches	Nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea

Fire Rescue personnel who come into contact with patients who exhibit signs and symptoms of the flu or influenza-like-illness should protect themselves, patients and future patients at all times by employing the following strategies to reduce the risk of contamination and future cross contamination.

- Patients exhibiting flu-like symptoms should be asked to wear a surgical mask. The EMS provider(s) should also wear an N95 mask during patient contact.
- Proper PPE should be utilized at all times during patient care.
- Wash your hands with warm water and soap after each encounter or use an alcohol based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your face with gloved or unwashed hands.

Influenza is spread through aerosolized droplets during coughing or sneezing by the infected patient. It is estimated that the virus can remain viable on equipment and other surfaces inside the rescue vehicle between 2 – 8 hours after contamination. This is more than enough time to potentially cross contaminate the next patient, yourselves or your co-workers. To prevent this type of cross contamination please follow the following guidelines.

- The virus can be killed by cleaning the rescue vehicle and equipment with water, detergents and disinfectants already provided by the Broward Sheriff's Office Fire Rescue.
- Wear non-sterile disposable gloves when cleaning and disinfecting the rescue vehicle and/or equipment.
- Pay particular attention to frequently touched surfaces in patient-care compartments (including stretchers, railings, medical equipment control panels, adjacent flooring, walls, ceilings and work surfaces, door handles, radios, keyboards and cell phones) that become directly contaminated by the patient's secretions.
- After cleaning and/or disinfecting the vehicle and/or related equipment, dispose of contaminated gloves and other cleaning materials in a biohazard bag.
- Cross contamination can occur in the cab of the vehicle when the driver is also directly involved in patient care. Be sure to clean door handles, steering wheels, radio and public address microphones, etc.

Should you have any questions about this advisory, please do not hesitate to contact myself (954-831-8254) or our Infection Control Officer, Captain Dave Erdman (954-321-4625).