

Considerations for Law Enforcement Agencies During the COVID-19 Pandemic
(updated March 26, 2020)

The Training and Standards Bureau has compiled a list of ideas that agencies may want to consider implementing to protect their officers and communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. These ideas and considerations have been compiled from webinars and conference calls sponsored by federal agencies and national law enforcement associations as well as ideas and considerations from local Wisconsin law enforcement agencies.

The Wisconsin Department of Justice is not requiring any of these practices. We are providing them as options to for agencies to consider as they navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. DOJ has not evaluated any of these recommendations. You should review them within your agency and consult your own resources – including your city attorney or corporation counsel – before you implement them.

We will update this list as we learn more, and we will highlight changes from the last version in red. If your agency would like to share any additional tips or considerations please send those to Stephanie Pederson at pedersonse@doj.state.wi.us.

Considerations for Reducing Individual Officer Exposure:

- Follow CDC guidelines for person protection (washing hands, social distancing, etc.).
- Reduce office personnel to essential personnel only.
- Limit how many officers are allowed to be together at the station at one time.
- Conduct Roll Call virtually (online) – not as a physical group.
- Send officers their shift assignments prior to the start of shift via email or some other electronic means. Officers would go straight to squads, wipe down squads, and start shift without coming into contact with other officers (for example, at roll call).
- Close or limit public access to the lobby areas at each agency.
- If meeting with people (and post this publicly) officers will not shake hands and will maintain social distancing protocols to the best of their ability.
- Cancel all citizen academies, ride-alongs, and other community visits.
- Carry Go-Bags with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- Decontaminate uniforms and gear using soap and water, or commercial cleaning supplies at the end of each shift or anytime an officer thinks they came into contact with someone who is sick.
- Establish sub-stations within your community to keep employee to employee exposure rates low (divide officers into smaller groups and have them work out of the substations).
- Within the agency, consider work areas for those who do not come into contact with the public and isolate them from patrol officers who are interacting with the public on patrol.
- Encourage officers to “frontload” themselves with high nutrient and antioxidant foods to boost their immune system.
- When off duty, try and get as much sleep as possible.
- Take the temperature of every officer when they arrive on shift. If over 100.4 degrees send them home.
- Use 1 person squads instead of 2 person squads.
- Try and assign officer so the same squads.
- Increase the cleaning and disinfecting of the office/common areas at the station/agency.

Considerations to protect officers when responding to calls:

- Have 911 dispatchers ask questions of callers about chances of COVID-19 exposure to officers prior to officers responding to a scene.
- Officers will respond in PPE if COVID-19 is suspected.
- Ask dispatchers to get phone number of individual calling. Officer can call individual back before entering the scene. Officers will see if they can handle the situation over the phone first.
- If there is a 911 hang-up, dispatch or officer should try to call back before responding to the scene.
- For medical calls, if law enforcement is not needed (it strictly is a medical call), law enforcement should not enter a residence/scene and let medical personnel handle the call.
- Do not respond to medical-only situations in nursing homes.
- Scale back on non-critical calls.
- Limit contact with people as much as possible.
- Take as many reports over the phone as possible.
- Consider ceasing issuing parking citations for overnight parking violations.
- For minor crashes, with no injuries, do not respond, have individuals involved report over the phone or self-report incidents.
- Consider which vehicle contacts to make (for example do not stop a vehicle for expired license plates, but do still enforce more serious violations such as OWI, stops, etc.)
- If making a vehicle contact, try to get information from running the license plate or a name given to you by the driver and do not take driver license from individual to avoid contact. Keep social distance as much as possible during contact.
- Officers could focus efforts on monitoring businesses such as big box stores (grocery stores) in case fights or other incidents breakout between customers. Monitor closed businesses for theft.
- Focus on violent crimes.
- Cite offenders where possible and summon them to court versus arrest (except violent crime).
- Wisconsin has already extended expired license plates and driver's licenses for 60 days.
- Enforce quarantines.
- Wisconsin has already waived commercial truck requirements (State Patrol doesn't need to inspect them for weight, loads, time on the road, etc.).

Communication with the Community:

- Keep the community updated through social media.
- Some agencies are having their officers read books on their social media page for kids - builds rapport with the community.
- Madison PD posted a picture of officers in masks and protective gear on their social media pages - they alerted the public to the idea that they may see an officer respond in this PPE but reassured the public this was for everyone's safety.

