

# PETERS TOWNSHIP

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## **Peters Township Emergency Management**

### **COVID-19 Update**

**March 13, 2020**

Peters Township and the Peters Township School District are working together to ensure the safety of all members of our community. Toward that end, Peters Township Emergency Management officials began planning for the potential widespread outbreak of COVID-19.

Under direction of Peters Township Fire Chief & Emergency Management Coordinator, Michael McLaughlin, Jr., the Peters Township Fire Department is responsible for the preparation, planning, and response coordination of all agencies to man-made and natural disasters, including public health crises. Through a combined effort of Peters Township Emergency Management, public safety agencies, and Township Council and administration, we have adopted an aggressive response to this health crisis.

#### ***Emergency Management***

In order to effectively monitor this situation and respond to the needs of our residents and visitors, the Township's Emergency Operations Center (EOC), located at Fire Station #1, has been activated and remains in a "ready" state. This center is the base of operations for any large-scale emergency or disaster response and involves representatives from all parties involved including police, fire, ems, public works, Township and school administration, and can expand/contract based on the needs of the current situation.

As part of the planning and preparation for COVID-19, meetings have taken place between all Peters Township response agencies, Township administration, and school district officials. Fire Department staff have been in contact with all nursing facilities and emergency care clinics to ensure precautionary measures are in place to handle the potential for COVID-19, as well as, reducing exposure should a case be confirmed. Additionally, all daycare and preschool facilities within the Township have been contacted to ensure adequate plans are in place and emergency contact information is updated, should we need to send mass communications regarding updates and guidelines. Finally, all religious institutions within the Township are being contacted to update emergency contacts and establish communication lines in hopes to reduce or avoid large gatherings.

## ***Emergency Response***

Following guidelines and suggestions from the Pennsylvania Department of Health and the Center for Disease Control, the following measures are taking place in order to protect our responders and reduce the contamination potential:

- Emergency Medical Response
  - All fire, police, and EMS units are fully equipped with the proper personal protective equipment to protect responders
  - Continued updates to all first responders as to the progression and spread of the virus
  - Dispatch procedures have temporarily changed so that fire personnel respond to priority medical calls (patient is unconscious or not breathing) only in order to reduce exposure
  - Patients feeling that they may have come in contact with COVID-19 are being triaged prior to transport. If a patient is not experiencing symptoms requiring the immediate intervention of an emergency department, a medical command physician and the PA Department of Health will be contacted for further directives. Minimal exposure of potentially infected patients is crucial to reducing contamination.

Contingency plans have been developed to ensure continuum of coverage if a first responder comes in contact with the virus. Isolation areas have been established, as well as a method for staffing if multiple responders are affected.

## ***Other Precautions***

- The Township Library and Recreation Center will close Monday March, 16<sup>th</sup> 2020 and remain closed for at least 10 business days. All organized recreation programs including youth sports activities will be suspended during the closure.
- Non-essential interaction with the public by public safety agencies will be avoided effective immediately. This interaction includes public education, car seat installations, and safety checks, as well as fire drills. If you have a specific question about an event, please feel free to contact the respective department.

## ***What you can do to help your community...***

- If you are experiencing symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath):
  - Avoid public interaction, including work and education
  - Contact your primary care physician or PA Department of Health at **1-877-PA-HEALTH** for guidance
  - Do not go to an emergency department or dial 911 unless you are experiencing:
    - Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath

- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
  - New confusion or inability to arouse
  - Bluish lips or face
- If you are a part of the high-risk population (over 60 and/or chronic medical illness)
  - Avoid public gatherings
  - Wash hands frequently
  - Clean and disinfect surfaces often
- If you are not experiencing symptoms:
  - Observe standard precautions including frequent hand washing and surface disinfection
  - Avoid social gatherings if possible
  - Assist elderly friends, neighbors, and family in order to reduce their public exposure as much as possible

***Looking ahead...***

This situation is being monitored 24/7 by Peters Township Emergency Management officials and the Emergency Operations Center will function until a time when this virus is deemed under control by the PA Department of Health and CDC. The assistance of our residents by adhering to the above suggestions is essential to reducing the spread of the virus and to the health of our friends and loved ones.

Receive the latest updates from Peters Township Emergency Management by checking the Township website, following the Peters Township Fire Department Facebook and Twitter accounts, and/or signing up for Township emails at [www.PetersTownship.com](http://www.PetersTownship.com).