

**Draft Guidelines
for
Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief Operations
in the
COVID19 Environment**



These guidelines for Disaster Relief Operations in a Covid-19 environment are provided as guidance for Group/Team Leaders (Blue Hat) and Team Members (Yellow Hat). As COVID19 is a novel virus and much about it is not yet fully understood, these guidelines should be considered in development and subject to review and change based on changing CDC and local rules and procedures. In all cases, the group/unit/member should follow current recommendations from Federal, State and Local authorities. This document should not substitute for such guidelines and current best practices, as they evolve, and common sense.

Introduction

This document provides an overview of necessary changes to normal disaster relief operations in order to provide safe and effective response where and when COVID-19 is an active concern. Disaster Relief Operations in a COVID19 environment requires adjustment of standard operation guides in order to support the safety of team members, the hosting facility, and those that we assist. The COVID 19 Guidelines are based upon the procedures and practices recommended by the Mississippi Department of Health, MEMA, and the Centers for Disease Control.

General Operations:

- 1) **PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY** should be stressed. These guidelines are to be followed by all individuals responding as a member of a MBDR response. The safety of each volunteer and those we assist is critical and calls for each of us to practice due diligence in these matters.
 - a. Volunteers should be thoroughly informed as to the risks of COVID19 infection.
 - b. Volunteers who have any sign of sickness should not be permitted to participate.
 - c. Volunteers should be screened daily as to physical well being and have temperature taken. Any volunteer who has fever should be inactivated and place in isolation area until they can be returned home.
- 2) **GOOD HAND HYGIENE** is critical. Hands should be washed or sanitized on a regular basis throughout the day for a period of at least 20 seconds. Specifically hands should be washed or sanitized:
 - a. prior to any meal being consumed;
 - b. before entering a vehicle for travel;
 - c. before and after operations at a workorder location or feeding activity;
 - d. before entering a housing location; and,
 - e. before entering a volunteer sleeping area.
- 3) The practice of **SOCIAL DISTANCING** must be maintained when at all possible.
 - a. Six (6) foot separation should be maintained between individuals when possible regardless of location and/or work activity.
 - b. Traditional physical signs of fellowship (shaking hands, hugs, holding hands for prayer, laying on of hands, etc.) between individuals should not be practiced.
 - c. Individuals should not gather or assemble in small groups.

- 4) The WEARING OF PROTECTIVE MASK is required in all activities and locations where an individual is involved in or with other team members or members of the public.
 - a. All face to face interactions should be conducted while wearing a mask and maintaining six (6) foot separation.
 - b. In the absence of approved masks, the use of handmade masks is acceptable.

Travel/Transportation:

- 1) If feasible, individuals should travel by separate vehicle.
 - a. The use of multi-passenger vehicles (vans/buses) is not recommended.
 - b. The use of a truck or passenger vehicle with more than two occupants is not recommended.
 - c. If traveling by two, both driver and passenger should use protective mask. (Homemade mask are acceptable if there is not an alternative.
- 2) Where multiple individuals are transported in the same vehicle, the vehicle should be disinfected after use.
 - a. Hard surfaces disinfected with disinfecting sprays or wipes suitable for COVID19.

Volunteer Housing:

- 1) When at all possible during a COVID19 Operation, volunteers should not be housed in overnight group accommodations (bunk houses, fellowship halls, gymnasiums, etc.).
- 2) Where overnight accommodations are required due to travel distances,
 - a. single person occupancy rooms (motel style) should be utilized as the first choice.
 - b. Where single occupancy rooms are unavailable, housing utilizing the smallest number possible grouped together is the second choice.
 - i. Rooms should provide a minimum of 110 sq. ft per person and six (6) foot separations between occupants.
 - ii. Cots/sleeping locations should be arranged head to toe to provide maximum separation.
 - c. Where small groupings are not feasible, the use of congregate sleeping arrangement should only be attempted as a last resort.
- 3) Assemblies/gathering of two or more individuals is not recommended.
 - a. Morning devotions/prayer, evening debriefing times/prayer, and gathering for meal distribution is permissible as long as social distancing is maintained and masks are used.
 - b. Individuals should disperse as soon as possible.
- 4) Areas used for housing and/or gathering should be disinfected on a regular basis at least once a day.
 - a. It is highly recommended that areas used for housing be disinfected multiple times daily depending on access and use.
- 5) Care should be taken to insure that the potential contamination on shoes/boots is not brought into the housing area. A shoe/boot area should be maintained outside the housing area .
 - a. Shoes/boots should be cleaned and disinfected daily after use. (soles)
- 6) Hands should be washed or sanitized prior to entering a housing area.

Chainsaw/Cleanup and Recovery/Tarping

- 1) Care should be taken to insure the practice of Social Distancing with six (6) foot separation where feasible.
- 2) All members should utilize masks when working in proximity to each other.
- 3) Ladders rails and rungs, man lift controls and rails, and tractor/skid steers seats and controls (hard surfaces) should be disinfected after each locations and end of day.
- 4) Power saws and hand tools (shovels, rakes, hammers, pliers, etc.) should be disinfected after each use prior to being returned to availability.

Feeding:

- 1) All food preparers and handlers are expected to wear all normal safety equipment (hairnet/hat, gloves, etc.) and a facial mask.
- 2) All food preparers and handlers are expected to practice social distancing where feasible.
- 3) Cleanliness in food preparation is a normal concern and practice, however in the COVID19 environment cleanliness is an extra precaution.
 - a. All canned food items should be cleaned and disinfected prior to opening.
 - b. All utensils used in food preparation and distribution should be cleaned thoroughly with hot water and soap after each use.
 - c. All food containers should be cleaned and disinfected after use.
 - d. All tables and other hard surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected after use.
- 4) If operating inside, every attempt should be made to provide adequate ventilation.

Chaplaincy/Assessors:

- 1) Chaplains/Assessors should maintain Social Distancing practices at all times when dealing with teams and homeowners.
- 2) Chaplains/Assessors should wear face masks in all dealings with teams and homeowners.
- 3) Chaplains/Assessors should sanitize/wash their hands between contacts with homeowners or teams.
- 4) Chaplains/Assessors should refrain from entering structures/homes if at all possible.
 - a. If it is necessary to enter a home, the minimum amount of time necessary to accomplish the task should be spent in the home.
 - b. Hands should be washed/sanitized prior to entry and upon exit of the home.