



**TO : Co-Chair Roblan
Co-Chair Holvey
Members of the Coronavirus Response Committee**

FR: Dan Brattain
CAL-ORE Life Flight
President, Oregon State Ambulance Association

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RE: COVID-19 EMS Needs

First, we would like to thank you for your leadership and efforts to flatten the curve during these uncertain times. We, the Oregon State Ambulance Association—Oregon’s only statewide association encompassing all kinds of EMS providers— write to you today to request State assistance so that we can properly respond and meet the needs of Oregonians during this global pandemic.

As first responders, we train regularly for large-scale emergencies. But, as other leaders in the medical field have pointed out, it is difficult to be fully prepared for a once-in-a-hundred-years event. After seeing the response and disease progression in other parts of the world, and assessing the current landscape here in Oregon, Oregon’s EMS community believes that the following actions are necessary to fully arm and protect our workforce so that we can meet the needs of Oregonians. Below are our suggestions:

In the field:

- **Allow for EMS personnel licensed in other states to practice in Oregon (reciprocity)** to cover for predicted staff shortages in Oregon
- **Allow ambulance suppliers and providers to transport patients that call the 9-1-1 or equivalent system with COVID-19 symptoms or confirmed cases to destination sites that are not a hospital, and allow for Medicaid reimbursement for those transports.** If hospitals reach capacity, EMS providers will need the flexibility to transport patients to alternative locations for treatment.
- **Allow for ambulance suppliers and providers to treat COVID-19 patients in their home** and allow for reimbursement at the Advanced Life Support reimbursement base rate (similar to the waiver regarding the Emergency Triage, Treatment and Transport CMMI initiative). This would allow ambulance suppliers to provide care in place for those patients who are PUI or confirmed thus limiting exposure in other healthcare settings.
- **Allow all responses related to COVID-19 to be billed at the Advanced Life Support rate, regardless if ALS interventions were performed.** Since COVID-19 is following infectious disease protocols, such as decontamination, PPE, etc...(these extraordinary responses have additional costs not normally related to traditional ALS ambulance transports) and will require Paramedic level scope of practice.
- **Prioritize unplanned COVID-19 test kits for unconfirmed cases tested in the field due to a 9-1-1 or equivalent response.**
- **Prioritize PPE gear for Emergency Medical Services personnel and allow funding for the additional PPE gear needed in inventory due to pandemic:** specifically, non-3M N95 masks, face shields and eye protection

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To ensure a strong and ready workforce:

- **Funding for childcare reimbursement** for essential emergency healthcare providers and suppliers.
- **Allow State-sponsored unemployment benefits to be used by EMTs and Paramedics who need to self-quarantine post-exposure.** In the likely event that our staff are exposed to COVID-19 in the line of duty and need to self-quarantine, they should not have to worry about paying their bills. We ask that state-sponsored unemployment benefits be available to all EMS workers—including those working for public and private agencies.
- **Funding for incentive pay to keep crews available**—one suggestion would be to offer this as a tax credit based on actual expenditures for employers who offer their employees incentive pay
- **Temporary tax relief:** including payroll tax holiday, CAT exemption
- **Extend current 90 day timely submission of claims requirements to match CMS and open card requirements (1 year).** With expected staff shortages, our providers need an increased window to submit claims for reimbursement. A one-year period is consistent with both CMS and open card requirements.

Additionally, as legislation, rule and executive orders are crafted for a COVID-19 Response, the Oregon State Ambulance Association respectfully asks that policy-makers keep in mind all kinds of ambulance providers—public, private, non-profit, ground and air—and that resources made available to first responders will include all agencies that hold an Ambulance Service Area contract with their local county.

Thank you again for your leadership during this critical time. The Oregon State Ambulance Association, and our members statewide stand ready to help.

Respectfully,

Dan Brattain
President
Oregon State Ambulance Association

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