PPE availability during the COVID-19 pandemic

During response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) will be scarce in certain areas of the country at various times. Therefore, it is possible U of M Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) members may not receive the complete complement of PPE they would receive under conventional deployment conditions. At deployment locations, decisions regarding the use of PPE will be based on guidance from the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Crisis Standards of Care.
When deployment opportunities are announced to MRC members, information will be provided on each designated response role including:

1. No PPE is required – social distancing on site recommended
2. PPE may be or is indicated due to potential contact with suspected or positive COVID-19 patients

U of M MRC members will be personally responsible for making decisions regarding their participation in each deployment when PPE resources are limited. The Health Emergency Response Office will provide all available information on the availability of personal protective equipment for each deployment. Members who choose to accept a deployment assignment will be asked to sign a waiver and release form signifying their understanding of the situation and their willingness to accept the deployment assignment.

CDC and the MDH provide guidance on adherence to [Crisis Standards of Care](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-providers/crisis-stanards-of-care.html).

- The principles of crisis standards of care ensure fair processes are in place to make clinically informed decisions about scarce resource allocation during a pandemic.
- Crisis care refers to the care and strategies at the facility level when demand acutely exceeds supply of resources and usual medical practices cannot be maintained.
- Major distributors in the United States have reported shortages of PPE, specifically N95 respirators, facemasks, and gowns. These supplies are currently categorized as a scarce resource.
- CDC is encouraging strategies to conserve supplies and optimize PPE:
  - Strategies for Optimizing the Supply of N95 Respirators: Crisis/Alternate Strategies

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