



Advice Regarding Cold & Flu Season

Purpose: To provide advice on courses of action for leaders, when faced with heightened risk of disease in the community.

Bottom Line:

- CAP Leaders have discretion when considering how to proceed, with options such as:
 - Cancelling meetings and events;
 - Using alternatives, such as video teleconferencing (e.g., MS Teams);
 - Assigning projects instead of meeting in-person.

Background: Each year, tens of thousands contract Influenza and significant numbers die from complications due to the infection. Given the availability of reasonably effective preventive measures, we want to ensure leaders are familiar with available options to effectively managing this annual health issue.

Typical Time Period: Fall through early spring is a time when many members experience symptoms consistent with a variety of contagious viral infections in addition to Influenza.

Policy Considerations: Consider developing a policy regarding members who are displaying symptoms of potentially communicable illness. Most viral infections easily spread from one person to another through simple measures like handling a doorknob or shaking hands. Flu is especially contagious due to the potential for transmission through coughing. Making it clear that potentially ill members should NOT attend a scheduled meeting or event will help to reduce risk.

Alternatives: Commanders of frequently-meeting local units and Activity Directors for significant CAP events, may wish to have hip-pocket alternatives, in order to ensure a minimum disruption of operations. Such alternatives may include:

- Cancelling a unit meeting or one-time activity, as one would for a disruptive weather event when there is a local “epidemic” reported. Meetings could resume the following week with little-to-no disruption. One-time activities might need to be rescheduled.
- Holding meeting components using alternative methods such as video conferences using TEAMS and other applications. Safety briefings, Character Development discussions, OJT-mentoring sessions, and other activities typically associated with face-to-face or weekly meetings, can be accomplished in this way. Remember to consider applicable Cadet Protection standards in CAPR 60-2.
- Assigning group projects in lieu of meeting, such as researching the latest developments in space flight, or preparing briefings on leadership techniques. Small groups may be able to get together in-person or online to work on these.

Prevention: Solid advice is often readily available through the CDC and local public health services. Best practices dictate we make sure that our members are aware of basic measures to prevent the spread of contagious illnesses:

- Staying away from others when one has symptoms of a potentially contagious illness. Such symptoms as coughing, fever, sore throat, vomiting and diarrhea are well recognized symptoms of a potentially contagious illness.
- When out in public or when around others who are possibly ill, wash your hands before touching your own head, nose, and mouth. Most viral infections are primarily transmitted through the hands. Use a hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.

- Sanitize common areas, doorknobs, telephones and the like frequently, and especially after use by anyone who might be contagious. There are many products available from common retailers that offer reasonable protection when sprayed on surfaces.
- Baseline health is important for individuals to reduce their personal risk. Eating well, hydration, exercising, and proper sleep play an important role in remaining healthy.

Regarding the Use of Facemasks: Facemasks can play a role in preventing the infection, but that role is limited in real world situations.

- There is some evidence that wearing a facemask can protect you from transmitting the virus from your hands to your mouth, probably because you are paying more attention to NOT touching your face when you're wearing it. You also have some protection from "splash" droplets if an infected person sneezes or coughs around you.
- The biggest concern that doctors have around recommending masks is the false sense of security that might come along with wearing one. There are many reasons why facemasks are not ideal. For example, it is challenging to find one that fits perfectly around your nose and mouth or to keep it on for a long duration.
- The minute you scratch your nose or touch your mouth behind the mask, you have lost the protection that the mask is supposed to offer.

Regulatory Considerations: For units with Cadets, remember to use good ORM in making decisions to hold meetings, and rest assured that cancelling a meeting because of widespread illness will forgive the requirement for minimum Cadet Program contact hours (per CAPR 60-1, paragraph 4.3.1.1.).

Further Support: Submit questions or recommendations regarding this advice to the CAP/HS staff, via your echelon's Health Service Officer. Thank you for everything you do to keep our Airmen well while they accomplish our missions.

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