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NEWS RELEASE

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Department of Health Releases Personal Protective Equipment Distribution Guidelines

CAMP MURRAY, WA – With the COVID-19 pandemic affecting the entire United States, and with Washington state being particularly hard-hit, the Washington State Department of Health is publishing guidelines on how personal protective equipment (PPE) will be allocated to counties with the greatest number of confirmed COVID-19 cases. This DOH guidance will help counties determine how to distribute PPE to their facilities.

Personal protective equipment is a scarce resource that is difficult to procure statewide, nationally, and internationally. The state's prioritization list does not guarantee that every order that meets the priority criteria will be fulfilled, and it does not ensure that complete orders will be fulfilled. The DOH Secretary of Health, State Health Officer, or Unified Command may modify the criteria based on emerging response needs.

- The first tier of recipients is long-term care facilities with confirmed COVID-19 cases, hospitals with the greatest number of confirmed cases, emergency medical services and first responders who are asked to transport confirmed patients, and health care workers supporting long-term care facilities with confirmed cases.
- The second tier of recipients comprises health care facilities with fewer confirmed cases, congregate locations with confirmed cases (such as jails, shelters or dormitories), other EMS services, and Department of Health-run isolation and quarantine facilities.
- The third tier of recipients is quarantine and isolation facilities run by other jurisdictions, followed by skilled nursing facilities, other health care facilities, and outpatient facilities.
- The fourth tier of recipients is homeless shelters and other congregate locations, and family members of confirmed cases who are at home.

Apart from the prioritization tiers, the guidelines take other considerations into account, as well as a recommendation that counties fulfill orders for up to seven days. Those considerations include methodology for how much protective equipment to allocate, based on the size of the facility, number of health care workers, the number of confirmed or suspected cases, or number of patients in need of assessment.

The prioritization of N95 respirators (masks) are only distributed to facilities in the first tier. Additionally they are only distributed at the highest priority to locations that perform aerosol-generating procedures.

The prioritization of personal protective equipment may evolve as this outbreak continues. For further updates on Washington state's response to the COVID-19 outbreak, please go to coronavirus.wa.gov.

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