

Patient/Subject Care

With the subject: The 1st aid-lead dons PPE (gloves/glasses/mask) and assesses subject; all others remain > 2m. from subject. All GSAR volunteers don gloves/glasses; **use a mask only if you need to be with the subject for urgent 1st aid** (e.g. C-spine control). Bystanders should be kept 3-5m. from subject.

As soon as possible, if there is no life-threatening injury, 1st aid-lead questions subject: "*Do you have any fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, sneezing, excessive fatigue or exposure to someone who is known or suspected to have COVID?*"; **if the answer to all of these questions is NO, all masks could be removed.**

If the subject is uninjured, they should be walked-out, respecting social distancing; **no mask needed for subject or for responders.** If subject is injured and cannot walk out, evacuate as per usual protocols.

If the subject answers YES to any question, but is uninjured and fit to walk, they should be walked out. Have the subject wear a surgical mask and medical gloves. **All GSAR members wear gloves/glasses/N95/procedure mask and Gore-Tex pants and jacket.** Maintain 3m. spacing from subject on hike out (note the increased spacing: if a subject coughs while exerting themselves, droplets may be spread > 2m.). **Remember, if you will not be in close contact with subject, do not wear a mask.**

If YES, but subject is unable to walk out, a stretcher carry, vehicle or helicopter evacuation will be required; Class D helicopter extraction is preferred since it minimizes number of responders exposed to subject. **All GSAR members who will be in close contact wear PPE (gloves/glasses/N95/procedure mask) and Gore-Tex pants and jacket.** Use a face shield on stretcher, and the subject should wear a surgical mask and gloves; use disposable stretcher packaging if possible, since packaging will be considered "contaminated". Any soiled 1st aid gear, etc. should be bagged & sealed in biohazard marked bags or common garbage bags that are sealed and clearly tagged as containing biohazard material. Members not actively carrying the stretcher maintain 2m. spacing, **and do not wear masks.** Inform SAR Manager of the situation so they can alert AHS.

Please note the recommendation for Gore-Tex pants and Gore-Tex jacket (or equivalent material). Protective gowns, suits, etc. designed for urban environments are not suited or workable for the wilderness. Your Gore-Tex now becomes part of your PPE: it is puncture resistant, water resistant (impermeable to mucous droplets), and can be washed in hot water & soap (easily decontaminated).

Proper fit of N95 masks: Some GSAR volunteers have correctly pointed out that to achieve optimal respiratory protection, N95 masks must be fit-tested. This requires trained "fit testers" who use specialized equipment to ensure there are no air leaks around the edges of the mask.

Although SAR Alberta Board acknowledges these concerns are valid, given the extraordinary challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic the Board believes it is in the best interest of the GSAR community to issue this guidance document.

While N95 masks which are not "fitted" cannot be guaranteed to prevent aerosol transmission, aerosol transmission is unlikely to occur frequently in a GSAR context, since COVID-19 is spread primarily by droplets in a non-hospital setting. Unfitted N95 masks are still likely to offer an enhanced level of protection from droplet transmission to GSAR volunteers. The Board believes the current guidance to be a realistic compromise between the desire of many GSAR volunteers for respiratory protection, and the advice that unfitted N95 masks may not filter out aerosols.

We encourage any member who wants to carry, and potentially use, an N95 mask to review this video (<https://youtu.be/zoxpvDVo NI>) which shows the proper way to don and doff an N95 mask. While not a substitute for actual fit-testing, following the steps in this video will increase your chance of a successful fit.

Another, completely acceptable, alternative to N95 masks is to use **standard surgical/procedure masks** rather than N95 masks. They provide excellent droplet protection but do not have the issues of having to be fitted.