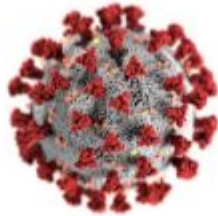


# Coronavirus Rapid Lesson Sharing Reports

A summary of coronavirus related lessons extracted from  
23 Rapid Lesson Sharing (RLS) reports.

Incidents included in this analysis occurred between  
March 7 and June 15, 2020.



— Rapid  
— Lesson  
■ Sharing



Lessons about new features in our  
Risk Management terrain.

**Read.  
Reorient.**

June 30, 2020

*The Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center exists to support learning in the wildland fire service. Since March of this year we have focused our efforts on operational learning related to the coronavirus pandemic. We have seen a massive influx of lessons being shared in a variety of formats. We have watched information and practices become quickly outdated—which is both frustrating and proof that we must invest in continuous learning. With that in mind, we acknowledge that this summary is a snapshot in time. Some of the lessons presented here may prove to be ineffective as conditions change. As we publish this summary, multiple new reports have come in containing new lessons that did not make it into this document. This is the nature of the situation we face.*

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Firefighters are shown here receiving COVID-19 nasal swab testing prior to demob on a Florida IMT incident. For more information and lessons see: [Florida Forest Service IMT COVID Mitigations RLS](#).

## 1. The Basics

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### ***“Focus on implementing the basics of preventing the spread of coronavirus.”***

This key statement from the [Sawtooth Fire OSC1 Observations RLS](#) summarizes a consistent theme that surfaced in numerous coronavirus-related RLS reports.

#### **From the Sawtooth Fire OSC1 Observations RLS**

The need to simplify and standardize the expectations for COVID-19 mitigations on incidents is the biggest single issue we must address. This guidance needs to be clear and concise, able to be implemented, and it must be communicated clearly and consistently.

1. Maintain the integrity of your “Module as One” at your home unit, while traveling and at the incident.
2. Maintain physical distancing of at least six feet with those outside of your Module as One whenever possible.
3. When distancing is not possible, or when in groups greater than 10, wear a mask or cloth face covering.
4. Use hand sanitizer or wash your hands frequently, especially after contact with high-touch surfaces such as doorknobs or fuel pumps.
5. Conduct daily self-assessments and temperature checks and isolate immediately and report to medical if you show the symptoms of COVID-19.

## 2. Briefing Messages

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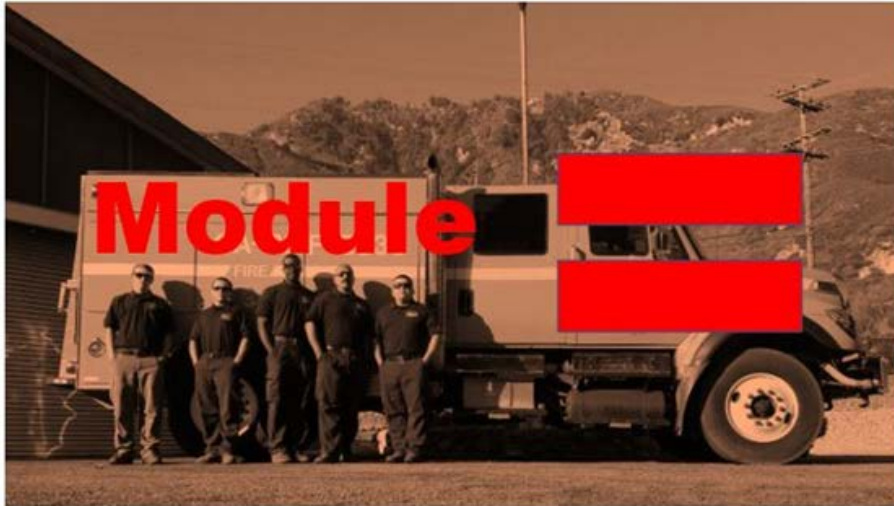
Several of the RLS reports discussed how to effectively message the need for adherence to COVID-19 mitigations. Some examples:

- ❖ Clearly and explicitly tie COVID-19 mitigations to core values of Duty, Respect, and Integrity.
- ❖ Use statements like this: “Everyone here has the right to a safe work environment and is empowered to direct a person to back up if they get within six feet.”

## 3. Limiting Contact/Interactions

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Many of the lessons are focused around what does and doesn’t work related to managing potential exposure. Similar to a wildland fire prevention program, multiple reports reiterate that *prevention* of coronavirus spread is our collective priority and therefore the responsibility of every responder.



### **Specific lessons related to limiting contact:**

#### **At Home/Enroute to Assignment**

- ❖ “Module as One” means the crew is treated as a family—not individuals as a module.
- ❖ If you are not able to Module as One (e.g. ADs, militia crews, thrown-together crews), then follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance for face coverings and physical distancing as best you can.
- ❖ Discuss after-hours exposure and the risks involved.
- ❖ At store stops, designate 1-2 crew purchasers to shop for the entire crew. Gather a list ahead of time.

#### **Arriving at an Initial Attack Fire or Line Assignment**

- ❖ Use a Chief of Party to be the only person who interacts with other modules/resources.
- ❖ Ask for a radio briefing early to help set the precedent for radio briefings.
- ❖ Stage well away while arranging/awaiting briefing.
- ❖ Only one module member attend any in-person briefings (Chief of Party).
- ❖ Thoroughly scout assignment areas before committing module. The number of assigned resources may not allow for safe distancing.

#### **Operations**

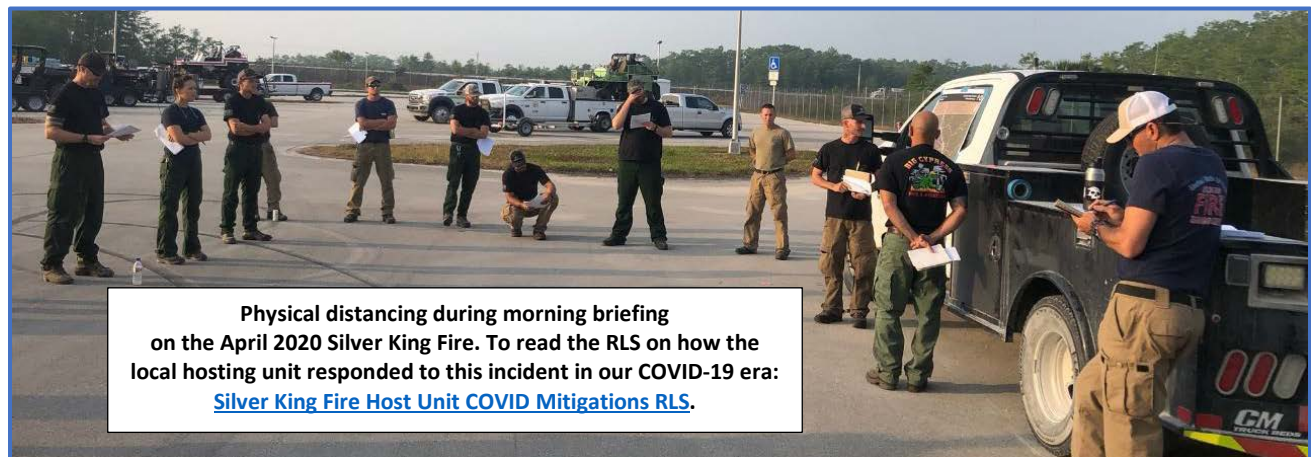
- ❖ Primary threat or focus may not always be COVID-19 (like Incident Within an Incident or high-tempo fire operations). But once primary threat is mitigated, remember to refocus on achievable coronavirus mitigations.
- ❖ Pre-plan how you will deal with ATV helmets (disinfecting, single operator, allowing fireline helmet, etc.).
- ❖ Demob resources as soon as practical to reduce numbers of people.

- ❖ Recognize that resources who regularly practice patient care may pose a higher exposure risk.

### Setting Up ICP

- ❖ Support “Module as One” camping system.
- ❖ Plan on larger footprint for ICP.
- ❖ Use remote check-in and demob if possible.
- ❖ Consider setting up and using a drive-through check-in.
- ❖ Consider having portions of IMT work off-site—like offices in a nearby town (vs traditional fire camp).

## 4. Physical Distancing



Physical distancing is one of the basic tools to help slow the spread of the coronavirus. The general theme regarding physical distancing and wildland fire efforts is acknowledging that strict adherence to the recommended safe distance will not *always* be possible.

In certain high-tempo operations such as evacuations, structures burning, and incidents within the incident, physical distancing will not be practical. These realities do not relieve us from adhering to physical distancing in all other instances where possible.

### Compliance

- ❖ Brief COVID-19 physical distancing and mask expectations early.
- ❖ Don't expect other resources to have the same practices/protocols.
- ❖ Get comfortable voicing concerns with physical distancing.
- ❖ Assign a position with the sole purpose to monitor and ensure physical distancing.
- ❖ Plan to release resources not complying to mitigations. Make this clear from the beginning.

### Briefing

- ❖ Large briefings without stage/PA are difficult for distancing. Consider radio or multiple small group briefings.

## Operations

- ❖ Specifically consider module distancing when designing/discussing operational assignments.
- ❖ Stagger end of shift release. Brief tomorrow's plan via radio. Such actions help to avoid congestion and grouping-up.

## 5. Masks

There has been some debate, confusion, and misunderstanding around guidance regarding masks, specifically about wearing them in vehicles and on the fireline.

These two points are addressed directly:

- ❖ Do not wear face coverings in a vehicle in which the occupants are your module.
- ❖ Only wear face coverings on the fireline if you would have done that normally last year.



The IMT on the Sawtooth Fire in Arizona asked that all those attending briefings wear a cloth face cover. See the [“Sawtooth Fire COVID-19 Mitigations on Large Fire Briefings RLS.”](#)

### The Case for Masks

The benefit of cloth face coverings and surgical masks as both source protection and personal protection needs to be made and consistently enforced. I have had success in relating the issue to seatbelts and our fire shelter. If these masks are 68% effective as the literature suggests then we need to acknowledge that they are not 100% effective and relate this to other safety standards we currently require. Your seatbelt will not save you in 100% of automobile accidents and your shelter is probably far less effective than masks in protecting you from injury or death in a burnover.

From the [SAWTOOTH FIRE OSC1 Observations RLS](#)

Face coverings are now a part of how we must do business. Adopting masks into wildland fire operations continues to be a steep learning curve. Here are some insights from past operations.

### Accounting for Loss of Non-Verbal Commo

- ❖ When masked, consciously adjust the communication style to more verbal (non-verbal less effective with mask).

### Keep Mask Accessible

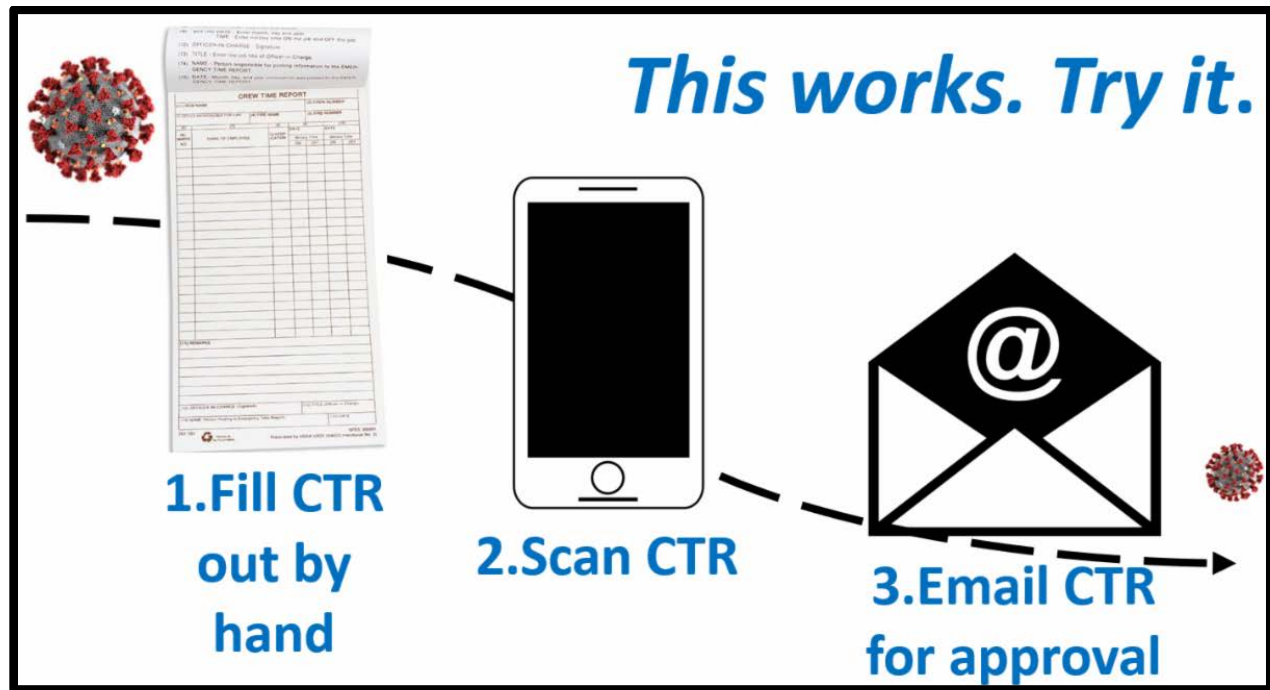
- ❖ Keep masks on person (not in vehicles) during operations for impromptu discussions with non-module resources.

### In Camp: COVID-19 is the Focus

- ❖ In camp, wear a mask and physical distance from those not in your module.



## 6. Digital Tools



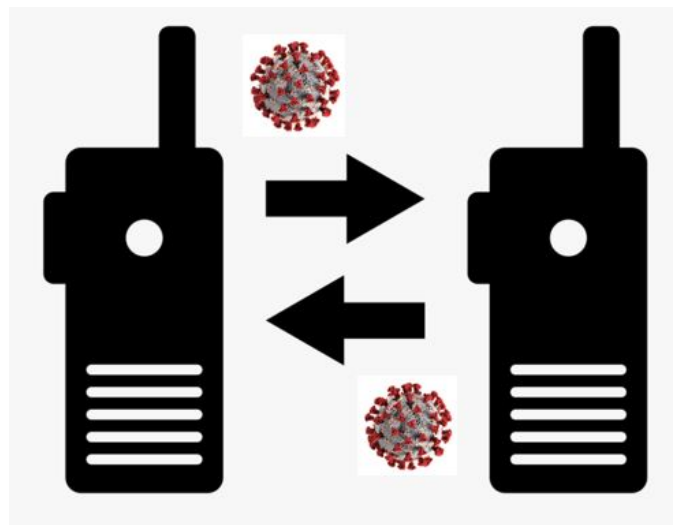
Numerous RLS documents discussed the increased need for comfort with and use of digital tools to aid with limiting potential COVID-19 exposure. The basic message is:

### **Get comfortable with as many ways to digitize as you can.**

- ❖ Get proficient at digital sharing with tools like “Air Drop”.
- ❖ Get proficient at using/sharing info via digital map tools such as Avenza and Collector.
- ❖ Share area map files with neighbor agencies now rather than waiting for the incident.
- ❖ Notify resources to maintain access to electronic versions of contracts, resource orders, time sheets, etc.
- ❖ Utilize digital signatures for all documents.
- ❖ Take photo of Crew Time Report and email for approval/signature (see illustration above).
- ❖ For restaurants, utilize payment apps (Venmo, PayPal, etc.). Have one person in the mod make the order and pay. Use the payment app to have everyone reimburse that individual.
- ❖ Email incoming resources a short in-brief with the following attachments: PDF maps, digital CTRs, digital OF-288s.
- ❖ Use QR codes to provide access to maps and IAP.

## 7. Sanitizing

- ❖ Invest heavily in baseline mitigations: washing hands, physical distance, and sanitizing.
- ❖ Become conscious of what you touch.
- ❖ Plan for sanitizing sequence for high-volume touch surfaces (saws, doors, radios, etc.).
- ❖ Limit sharing wherever possible.
- ❖ When using a microphone, place it on a stand and ensure speakers wear face coverings.
- ❖ Plan for higher workload on camp crews; you may need more crews than typical.
- ❖ If an operation calls for rotating individuals in a vehicle, select a vehicle with vinyl seats, they are more easily cleaned.

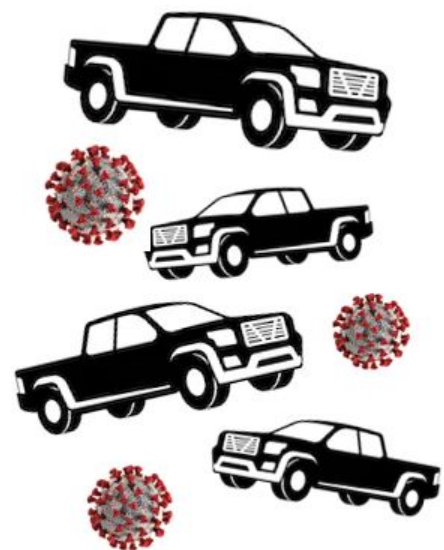


## 8. Incident Within an Incident

- ❖ Know that COVID-19 mitigations will flex during IWI. Incorporate exposure management into IWI planning.
- ❖ Know that the Hospital Liaison will likely not be allowed inside the hospital (see [Verde Fire Medivac COVID-19 RLS](#)).

## 9. Vehicles

- ❖ Plan for more vehicles to be on-site.
- ❖ Carry your own flight helmet/ATV helmet if possible.
- ❖ Limit “jumping into different rigs”. This reduces exposure and contamination.
- ❖ Same people travel in the same vehicle—no need for physical distancing.
- ❖ Travel with windows open to increase air flow.
- ❖ No need to mask in a vehicle with your own module.





## 10. Contact Tracing

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- ❖ Request email resource summary to aid in contact tracing.
- ❖ Diligently maintain up-to-date contact info on all resources. This is needed in case of exposure (contact tracing).
- ❖ Invest in learning basic public health principals and terminology.
- ❖ Engage with public health staff early—invite to cooperator meetings.

**For more insights and lessons on contact tracing, see: [Sawtooth Fire COVID-19 Mitigations RLS](#).**

## 11. Food Safety/Nutrition

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- ❖ There is likely very low risk of spread from food products or packaging.
- ❖ Proper hydration and nutrition all play a role in immunity.
- ❖ Focus on small portions throughout the day rather than large meals.

**For more insights and lessons on food safety/nutrition, see: [Food Safety and Nutrition RLS](#).**

## 12. Plans/Preparation

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- ❖ Conduct more frequent AARs to adjust operations as they relate to COVID-19.
- ❖ Assemble food boxes for each vehicle to help with self-sufficiency.
- ❖ Having a plan that includes specific steps for a positive COVID-19 test is very helpful (notifications, housing, cleaning, public health contacts, etc.).
- ❖ Establish trigger points around COVID-19 PPE/sanitation/holding capacity. Don't order more resources than you can sustain.
- ❖ Identify multiple ICP/staging locations.
- ❖ Print large maps of your response area and have them with you to hand out.

## 13. Testing

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- ❖ Identify local COVID-19 testing capacity, process, and contacts.
- ❖ Emphasize the snapshot-in-time nature of testing (travel home after testing is new risk).
- ❖ Isolate until results are received.
- ❖ Cover communication plan for a positive COVID-19 test result with dispatch prior to initiating notifications.
- ❖ Include Emergency Management and Health Department in notifications of a positive COVID-19 test.
- ❖ Assign dedicated personnel to assist with COVID-19 testing and tracking communications. Proper follow-up is a full-time job.

## 14. COVID-19 RLS Reports

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[Hotshot Crewmembers COVID-19 Positive Tests \(2020\)](#)  
[Sawtooth Fire OSC1 COVID-19 Observations \(2020\)](#)  
[Sawtooth Fire Coronavirus Exposure \(2020\)](#)  
[Food Safety and Nutrition COVID 19 \(2020\)](#)  
[Humboldt Toiyabe NF Crewmember COVID-19 Exposure \(2020\)](#)  
[Basin Fire COVID-19 Mitigations \(2020\)](#)  
[Florida Forest Service IMT COVID Mitigations \(2020\)](#)  
[84 Fire COVID-19 Mitigation \(2020\)](#)  
[Coronavirus Guidelines Clarification for the Fireline and Fire Camp \(2020\)](#)  
[Hyndman Fire Response COVID Risk \(2020\)](#)  
[560 Fire COVID-19 Lessons \(2020\)](#)  
[COVID-19 Positive Test Response Huron-Manistee \(2020\)](#)  
[Silver King Fire COVID-19 Host Unit Mitigation \(2020\)](#)  
[S.W. Colorado Fuel Geyser \(2020\)](#)  
[Shepard Road Fire COVID-19 Mitigations \(2020\)](#)  
[Heli-Rappel Training COVID-19 Lessons \(2020\)](#)  
[Drumheller Fire COVID Mitigation \(2020\)](#)  
[Henry Creek Fire COVID-19 Lessons \(2020\)](#)  
[Verde Fire Medevac and COVID-19 Lessons \(2020\)](#)  
[Silver King Fire Heat and COVID-19 \(2020\)](#)  
[189 Fire COVID-19 Lessons \(2020\)](#)  
[Multiple Northwestern Fires COVID-19 Lessons \(2020\)](#)  
[Lion Fire COVID-19 Lessons \(2020\)](#)

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### **COVID-19 Discussion Forum**

***This forum provides a platform for the greater fire community to ask questions or share ideas, information, and solutions:***

[COVID-19 and Fire Season 2020 Community](#)

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