

Ongoing Guidance from the Civil Defence Medical Director for Civil Defence Officers and Volunteers on COVID-19

Some Civil Defence Volunteers by virtue of their age or underlying health conditions may be more at risk from COVID-19.

The **At Risk Groups** as identified on the HSE Website include:

- 60 years of age and over - people over 75 are particularly vulnerable,
- have a long-term medical condition - for example, heart disease, lung disease, diabetes, cancer or high blood pressure,
- have a weak immune system (immunosuppressed). These include:
 - cancer treatment
 - treatment for autoimmune diseases, such as rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, multiple sclerosis (MS) and inflammatory bowel diseases
 - HIV
 - having an organ transplant or a bone-marrow transplant
 - Other lung viruses can cause severe illness in people who have a weak immune system.

Ref: HSE Guidance for At Risk Groups

1. Advice in relation to Civil Defence Operations and Supporting the Principal Response Agencies

My advice remains as previously stated; Civil Defence Volunteers in the At Risk Groups or those advised to 'cocoon' should not be involved in operations which require any, interaction with or transport of patients whether suspected or not suspected of having COVID-19.

2. Advice in relation to Civil Defence Training whether local or Central Training

Civil Defence Training does not present the same level of risk as Civil Defence Operations; therefore, all volunteers may attend training. However, it is important training is conducted in a manner that infection risk is minimised.

The following points must be considered in advance of any training:

- Volunteers must choose to complete the training i.e. no volunteer should feel compelled to have to attend training,
- Volunteers who are in the 'At Risk Groups' may attend training, however the individual must inform the instructor and CDO of this fact and additional safeguards may be required.
- Consider reduced numbers and smaller groups to facilitate social/physical distancing,
- Where appropriate and weather permitting, some training may be completed outdoors,
- All participants must adhere to social/physical distancing throughout the training,
- Ensure appropriate PPE is used where required,

- Explore the use of equipment ratios and ensure equipment is cleaned between uses,
- Consider Temperature checks for training participants, and
- Follow HSE/HPSC handwashing and PPE preventative measures at all times

This is not an exhaustive list; the decision to deliver training must include a local risk assessment, including consideration of resources and facilities available.

The PHECC recommendation that mouth to mouth or mouth to mask ventilation should not be taught in the current situation, must be followed. PHECC advise that such elements of training may be omitted and taught at a later stage.

In addition, as the guidelines are changing regularly, all Civil Defence personnel should keep themselves abreast of guidance issued on the HSE and HPSC websites.

Kind regard.

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