

FAQ – First Responders COVID-19 Risk Look-Up Web Portal

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. I need help with the First Responders COVID-19 Risk Look-Up Portal. Who should I contact?

Inquiries may be directed to the COVID-19 Enforcement Support Line. Please call the following number: 1-866-389-7638. Assistance is available Monday to Sunday, from 8 a.m. EST – 9 p.m. EST.

To ensure the line can effectively respond to inquiries, the ministry requests that information associated with the support line not be disclosed to the general public.

2. What information is included in the portal?

The portal contains confirmed positive test results (beginning on April 1, 2020) for individuals who qualified for and have undergone a COVID-19 test. An individual who is included in the portal is never removed, even if they have subsequently recovered.

Policing personnel should continue to conduct point of interaction risk assessments and take other appropriate precautions when interacting with members of the public. It is important to continue to exercise caution and seek advice from local public health units on precautionary measures to take during interactions with members of the public.

3. Does the Ontario government certify the information in the portal to be completely accurate and up to date?

The Province of Ontario does not warrant that the information available through portal is complete, accurate, or up-to-date. The information is not intended to be relied upon as a definitive indicator of whether an individual has COVID-19 at the time of interaction.

Having access to COVID-19 status information is only one tool to assist frontline personnel with taking appropriate precautions. Individuals who are positive for COVID-19 may not have had a positive test, information about positive tests may not be available immediately, and individuals may be able to spread COVID-19 without showing any symptoms. Thus, it is important to continue to exercise caution and seek advice from local public health units on precautionary measures to take during interactions with members of the public.

4. What are some of the considerations with respect to the information contained within the portal?

Please note the following considerations regarding the information contained in the portal:

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- It may take up to four days for test results to become available;
- The information in the portal is only updated once a day and does not reflect real-time testing information;
- Individuals who have tested positive may no longer have COVID-19;
- An individual who is included in the portal is never removed;
- Individuals' addresses may be recorded inconsistently;
- An address for a multi-unit building may have a positive case but not at the relevant unit; and
- There may be individuals at an address who do not reside there.

APPROPRIATE USE OF PORTAL

5. What are the parameters with respect to the use and disclosure of information contained within the portal?

The *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* (EMCPA) requires that information shared pursuant to [O. Reg. 120/20](#) only be used to prevent, respond to, or alleviate the effects of the emergency. The EMCPA also requires that any information-sharing authorized under the emergency order occur in a manner that limits its intrusiveness.

The portal is *only* intended to be used to look up the COVID-19 status of individuals that members of the police service will encounter or have encountered during the declared emergency *as a result of responding to calls for service*, for the sole purpose of supporting frontline policing personnel in making informed decisions about whether they need to take additional precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

The portal must not be used to advise any individual about its contents for unauthorized purposes (*e.g., disclosures to heads of council or public health units for informational purposes*). For greater certainty, searches of the portal should not be conducted to ascertain the number of individuals in a municipality or region that appear on the portal and such information, if already obtained, should not be shared; such a use of the portal is not consistent with the requirements of the EMCPA in the ministry's view.

It is imperative that police services boards and chiefs of police protect the sensitive personal health information in the portal.

Police services should consult with their legal counsel to determine whether access to or use or disclosure of information from the portal is permitted.

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6. Why is there sometimes a significant discrepancy between the number of positive COVID-19 cases being reported by local public health units and the number of persons on the spreadsheet based on the portal?

Previously, the portal contained the COVID-19 status of individuals who qualified for and have undergone a COVID-19 test that was determined to be not negative (*e.g., incomplete and indeterminate test results*).

As of April 25, 2020, the ministry has improved the data quality of the portal. It now only contains confirmed positive test results (beginning on April 1, 2020) for individuals who qualified for and have undergone a COVID-19 test. An individual who is included in the portal is never removed, even if they have subsequently recovered.

Please note the following considerations regarding the information contained within the portal:

- It may take up to four days for test results to become available;
- The information in the portal is only updated once a day and does not reflect real-time testing information;
- An individual who is included in the portal is never removed.
- Individuals who have tested positive may no longer have COVID-19;
- Individuals' addresses may be recorded inconsistently;
- An address for a multi-unit building may have a positive case but not at the relevant unit; and
- There may be individuals at an address who do not reside there.

The ministry continues to work to improve the portal including the quality of data available and will share further updates as available.

7. If an individual has recovered from COVID-19 are they removed from the list?

No, they are not removed.

8. Is the portal available to external special constable law enforcement agencies and municipal by-law enforcement officers?

The Emergency Order (O. Reg. 120/20) does not entitle non-police employed special constables or municipal by-law enforcement officers to gain access to the information from specified custodians or through the Ministry of Health information portal. Any disclosure to non-authorized persons would need to be made in accordance with applicable legislation, including the EMCPA and *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (MFIPPA) or the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FIPPA).

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The EMCPA provides that the information must only be used to prevent, respond to, or alleviate the effects of the emergency.

PRIVACY AND SECURITY

9. Is there an audit logging function available for the portal?

The ministry has instituted an audit logging function that will track all user activity on the portal and flag any queries that are deemed to be inappropriate use of the portal (e.g., broad municipal-based searches). Where such inappropriate use of the portal is confirmed, the ministry may revoke access to the portal for the user who violated the terms of service or the entire group of users affiliated with the police service.

Furthermore, the ministry may report suspected unauthorized portal access or use/disclosure of information from the portal to the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario. The ministry will, on request of a chief of police or police services board, provide a copy of an authorized user's audit logs for the purpose of investigating unauthorized access, or use or disclosure of information, for the purpose of pursuing discipline.

10. I need to investigate a suspected unauthorized access or use. Can the ministry provide me access to a user's activity?

The ministry will, on request of a chief of police or police services board, provide a copy of an authorized user's audit logs for the purpose of investigating unauthorized access, use or disclosure or pursuing discipline.

If you need access to a user's activity log, please contact the COVID-19 Enforcement Support Line at 1-866-389-7638.

11. What employment sanctions are available to a police services board or a chief of police if an individual misuses the portal or information from the portal?

Depending on the circumstances, the misuse of the portal or information from the portal by a police officer may amount to misconduct under the *Police Services Act*. The misconduct that could follow includes:

- Insubordination (depending on directions given or chief's procedures made);
- Breach of confidence (e.g., divulging any matter which it is the police officer's duty to keep secret); or
- Discreditable conduct (e.g., acting in a manner likely to bring discredit upon the police force's reputation).

The consequences for misconduct, after a hearing, can include suspension without pay and dismissal from employment with the police service.

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The conduct of other employees in police services may also be subject to discipline.

12. What other consequences could individuals face?

It is a provincial offence under section 48 of the MFIPPA and section 61 of the FIPPA for a person to willfully disclose personal information in contravention of those Acts. On conviction, a person may be liable to a fine not exceeding \$5,000.

13. What is the ministry doing to secure access to data in the portal?

The ministry has only allowed individuals who perform communication and dispatch functions to access the portal. Those individuals have been issued with a user name and password to access the portal.

All activity on the portal is tracked by the ministry. Where inappropriate access or queries of the database is identified, the ministry will make the appropriate notifications and support investigation into the conduct. The ministry also can revoke access and suspend user privileges.

14. How should we be treating data pertaining to disclosure of COVID-19 status information, including the collection, use, disclosure, retention and destruction of the data?

The ministry continues to advise police services boards and chiefs of police to set default expiry dates for any alerts/flags in your computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system. The expiry dates should coincide with the day the declared provincial emergency ceases to be in effect.

Where your police service chooses to enter “remarks” into your CAD system, please ensure that personal health information is only included if necessary, and only the minimum amount of personal health information is included. The ministry recognizes that some functionalities of CAD systems may automatically transfer information into your Records Management System (RMS). This information continues to be subject to applicable law during and after the declared emergency, including the MFIPPA or the FIPPA.

15. Can COVID-19 status information obtained through portal be included in CPIC or intelligence databases?

Please note the COVID-19 status information should not be entered into the Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC) and intelligence databases. The ministry encourages masking and restricting access to such personal health information as soon as practicable and no later than the conclusion of the provincial emergency.

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16. Should policing personnel continue to take notes in their memo books?

Please be advised that policing personnel should continue to take appropriate notes in memo books in accordance with local policies and procedures, which may include information about the COVID-19 status of an individual.

17. Can COVID-19 status information be broadcast over the radio to policing personnel on the field through our communication and dispatch centre?

COVID-19 status information may be broadcast over your dispatch centre's encrypted radio communications system to the appropriate policing personnel to the extent necessary. The ministry recognizes that such radio transmissions will be recorded permanently and maintained for evidentiary purposes, where applicable, and in accordance with provincial legislation.

Please avoid relaying any personal health information over unencrypted electronic or radio communication systems. Please note that the EMCPA provides that personal information subject to an emergency order is subject to any law with respect to the privacy and confidentiality of personal information when the declared emergency is terminated.

Police services should consult with their legal counsel to determine whether access to or use, disclosure or destruction of information from the portal is permitted.

18. I want to download or export the list data in the portal. How do I do that?

For privacy reasons, those functions are not permitted. Please refer to the appropriate usage statements provided in the User Guide.

19. How long should I be keeping alerts and flags in my computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system?

Any alerts/flags using the COVID-19 status information in your CAD systems should be set to a default expiry date. This expiry date should coincide with the day the declared provincial emergency ceases to be in effect.

TROUBLESHOOTING

20. I do not have a user account for the First Responders COVID-19 Risk Look-Up Portal. Can you help me create one?

Access to the portal is only being provided to authorized users. Authorized users are individuals identified by the police service and who perform a communication and dispatch function. The ministry will be screening using job function and only allow access to individuals whose work has a nexus to communication and dispatch.

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- 21. My police service has identified me as an authorized user and I perform a communication and dispatch function. Can you please provide me access to the portal?**

Please contact the COVID-19 Enforcement Support Line at 1-866-389-7638 and provide the ministry with the name of your police service, your surname, first name, email address and job title. A person at the ministry will get back to you as soon as possible.

- 22. I forgot my password and/or I am locked out because I tried unsuccessfully to login in more than four times. Can you help me?**

Please contact the COVID-19 Enforcement Support Line at 1-866-389-7638 and provide the ministry with your user name, first name, surname and email address and the police service that you are calling from. A person at the ministry will get back to you as soon as possible.

- 23. I have the URL for the portal, but it is still not working. Can you help me access it?**

If the URL used is correct and the site is still not found, one should consult their local IT support personnel.

- 24. When will system maintenance be performed and how will authorized users be notified?**

When system maintenance is required, a notice will be posted on the website and an email to all users will be sent in advance.