

**American Ambulance Association · Congressional Fire Services Institute  
International Association of Fire Chiefs · International Association of Fire Fighters  
National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians · National Fire Protection  
Association · National Volunteer Fire Council**

July 13, 2020

The Honorable Donald Trump  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

On behalf of the American Ambulance Association, Congressional Fire Services Institute, International Association of Fire Chiefs, International Association of Fire Fighters, National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians, National Fire Protection Association, and the National Volunteer Fire Council, we urge you to ensure that firefighters and emergency medical services (EMS) personnel are placed on the highest priority tier for receiving COVID-19 vaccinations when they are available. America's first responders are serving bravely as the tip of the spear in the battle against the SARS-CoV-2 virus and its resulting illness, COVID-19. First responders are placing themselves in immediate danger of contracting the virus while they care for COVID-19 patients. This danger is evident in the fact that nearly 60 firefighters and EMS personnel have died after contracting COVID-19 and thousands more have been placed in quarantine or isolation. It is imperative that our first responders are afforded every possible protection and vaccinations are a critical component to that protection.

As you know, fire departments and EMS agencies are an important piece of the healthcare system and provide pre-hospital emergency medical care and transportation to ill and injured patients. Each year, more than 30 million patients enter the healthcare system through an ambulance and COVID-19 patients are no exception. Firefighters and EMS personnel place themselves in harm's way when caring for COVID-19 patients in uncontrolled environments like a patient's home or in an ambulance. Protecting firefighters and EMS personnel is all the more difficult since a patient's COVID-19 status may be unknown in the field. As a result, firefighters and EMS personnel must treat all patients as potentially COVID-19 positive as any lapses or complacency in infection control procedures could have serious consequences.

Sadly, fire departments and EMS agencies still face chronic challenges in protecting their personnel due to earlier decisions by federal and state government agencies to de-prioritize fire departments and EMS agency access to COVID-19 testing and personal protective equipment (PPE). Many of these issues stem from failures to recognize the importance of pre-hospital EMS and the artificial discrepancy that was made by excluding firefighters and EMS personnel from the prioritized protections and testing afforded to in-facility healthcare workers. The failure to prioritize firefighters and EMS personnel along with other healthcare workers cannot be

repeated. As the federal government implements Operation Warp Speed and develops a vaccine distribution strategy, firefighters and EMS personnel must be included in the highest priority tier. It is critical that our nation's first responders are protected in order to maintain their readiness to respond to future waves of COVID-19, "routine" emergencies, and major incidents such as natural disasters and acts of terrorism.

As the representatives of more than one million firefighters and EMS personnel across the United States, we urge you to take decisive action to protect our protectors. Ensuring firefighters and EMS personnel have prioritized access to vaccinations is vital to remaining prepared for any biological, natural, or man-made emergency which we might face. Our organizations look forward to continuing to work with you to develop plans and policies to ensure an efficient response to the COVID-19 public health emergency while also protecting the firefighters and EMS personnel who serve on the front lines each and every day.

Sincerely,

American Ambulance Association  
Congressional Fire Services Institute  
International Association of Fire Chiefs  
International Association of Fire Fighters  
National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians  
National Fire Protection Association  
National Volunteer Fire Council

CC: The Honorable Robert Kadlec, Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Dr. Robert Redfield, MD, Director, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Dr. Jose Romero, MD, FAAP, Chair, U.S. Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices

The Honorable Francis Collins, MD, Ph.D., Director, National Institutes of Health

Dr. Gary Disbrow, Ph.D., Acting Director, Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority

General Gustave Perna, Commanding General, U.S. Army, Materiel Command

The Honorable Peter Gaynor, Administrator, Federal Emergency Management Administration

The Honorable James Owens, Deputy Administrator, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration