



**From:** Operational Support Division  
COVID-19 Emergency Operations Centre

**To:** The Chair and Members of the Waterloo Regional Police Services Board

**Date:** September 9, 2020

**Subject:** **First Responders COVID-19 Risk Look-Up Web Portal**

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**Recommendation:**

For information only.

**Summary:**

In April 2020, the Ministry of the Solicitor General launched the First Responders COVID-19 Risk Look-Up web portal, which includes information about the COVID-19 status of specific individuals. Access to the portal was only provided to authorized users within a Service's communication and dispatch centre to protect personal health information from unauthorized access and to promote compliance with the *Emergency Management & Civil Protection Act* (EMCPA).

Information was only disclosed when needed to support frontline policing personnel in making informed decisions about whether to take additional precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 when responding to calls for service.

Between April 17-July 20, 2020, the Waterloo Regional Police Service accessed this database 1180 times, which is a rate of 0.2 per 100 people. Access to this portal was terminated by the Ministry on July 20, 2020.

**Report:**

Shortly after receiving information from the Ministry of the Solicitor General in April 2020 regarding the pending launch of the First Responders COVID-19 Risk Look-Up web portal, the Waterloo Regional Police Services Board developed a policy entitled Disclosure of COVID-19 Status Information. This policy was approved by the Board on April 15 to ensure that the collection, access, use, disclosure and destruction of COVID-19 status information would be done in a manner consistent with all existing legislation and the guidelines provided by the Ministry regarding this portal.

Also on April 15, a Standing Order was issued by the Chief of Police regarding the

Disclosure of COVID-19 Status Information along with a subsequent Directive issued to WRPS members by the Service's COVID-19 Emergency Operations Centre.

According to the Ministry of the Solicitor General, the Portal was intended to be used to look up COVID-19 status of individuals whom first responders may encounter or had encountered, as a result of responding to calls for service. As such, the sole purpose of the Portal was to support frontline personnel in making informed decisions about whether they needed to take additional precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Access to the web portal was authorized for only dispatchers and Communications Supervisors (41 in total) within the Service's Communications Unit (call takers within the Communications Unit were not included to minimize the number of authorized persons with access).

A query of the web portal was only conducted by a dispatcher under the following circumstances:

- A positive (or unknown) response was received to any COVID-19 screening questions asked by a call taker;
- A positive (or unknown) response was received to any COVID-19 screening questions asked, or a person was observed to be symptomatic, by an officer upon arrival at an incident.

If any of the above criteria were met, a query of the web portal was conducted by the dispatcher. If the query was found within the database, officers at the incident would be advised via voice radio or in-car computer message that there was a need for universal precautions (full use of personal protective equipment as per WRPS Directives) – in order to further respect privacy, the message did not identify a person(s) or indicate a person was positive. If the query was not found within the database, officers would be advised that there was nothing noted requiring universal precautions.

No COVID-19 status information from this web portal was entered into CPIC or any individual or premises Records Management System record or any other database. Similarly, no such information was added to the CAD (computer-aided dispatch system) via any premise warnings or flags/alerts. The information from the web portal was used solely to communicate the need or absence thereof for universal precautions by the officers at an incident. There were no matters where the Police laid charges under Federal or Provincial pandemic related legislation, so the information was never accessed for or added to a particular occurrence report.

In early July, the Ministry of the Solicitor General conducted an audit of WRPS web portal queries for the period of June 19-26, 2020. Of the 46 queries conducted over this period of time, only one query was identified for further review and investigation subsequently determined that the query was conducted in accordance with portal usage guidelines.

While it was the Service's intent to review and delete all records once the declaration of emergency was ended (unless it formed part of a matter before the Courts), the Ministry's ending of the Portal triggered an earlier review. As it turned out, since no records were created or retained from the Portal that identified an individual or their status, the Service has no records to purge.

**Strategic Priorities and/or Operations Plan:**

N/A

**Financial and/or Risk Implications:**

Nil

**Attachments:**

Nil

**Prepared By:** Tom Berczi, Superintendent, Operational Support Division

**Approved By:** Bryan M. Larkin, Chief of Police