

Waste collectors, crematorium cleaners carry on despite COVID-19 risk

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While most of the population stay at home to limit the spread of COVID-19, collectors of hospital wastes and cleaners of crematorium and quarantine facilities remain on the job handling potentially dangerous wastes every day.

In Saleema Refran's exclusive report on 24 Oras, Jhon Espaldon of the Task Force Special Waste Collection in Quezon City detailed the danger they face in their work.

"Hindi man kami direktang humahawak sa mga pasyente pero 'yung pinaggamitan nila, 'yung pinagkainan, pinaggamitan ng tissue, lahat, even beddings kailangan namin i-disinfect," Espaldon said.

"Parang-awa niyo na po na tulungan niyo kami na mawala na 'yung virus natin. 'Yung ganoong parte po na hindi niyo pag-labas, pag-stay niyo sa bahay, 'yung mga gamit na pinaggamitan natin nakalagay lang sa tamang basurahan, napakalaking bagay na po," he added.

The disinfection team will first enter crematoriums or testing centers to sanitize areas that may have been used by possible COVID-19 patients.

The waste collection team will follow to collect the garbage, which will also be disinfected.

"Pag babalewalain lang ho namin 'yung mga proteksyon, hindi ho kami mag-iingat. Hindi ho natin alam baka sa mga basurahan po may makuha po'ng virus," Oliver Dajao said.

The frontliners also take extra precaution when cleaning the interior and exterior of crematoriums.

With their work done, they will then disinfect each other.

According to the report, they also exercised caution when picking up garbage from hot zones in the city or the houses of confirmed COVID-19 cases.

Though the frontliners knew that they carried a big responsibility, they were also very aware of the accompanying danger.

"Nakakatakot din po kasi hindi rin po biro 'yung ganitong trabaho. Virus 'yun eh, virus talaga, kasi kailangan parang lakasan na lang po ng loob," Gerald Mones said.

"Lahat po kami natatakot po na pinasok po namin ganito may kumakalat po na sakit. Para lang po sa bayan po, para lang makatulong," Jan Padro, disinfection team, added.

They also took pride in their jobs, despite not being as acknowledged as other frontliners.

"Garbage collector lang na simple lang po. Kahit po ganito lang 'yung tingin niyo sa amin, at least po makatulong kami sa inyo na linisin 'yung lugar natin para hindi na po kumalat 'yung coronavirus," Roldan Marijuan, a special waste collector, said. —**Joahna Lei Casilao/LDF, GMA News**

<https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/metro/734542/waste-collectors-crematorium-cleaners-carry-on-despite-covid-19-risk/story/>