



NEWS RELEASE

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County of Los Angeles Declares Local Health Emergency in Response to New Novel Coronavirus Activity

LOS ANGELES –Today, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors (Board) and the Department of Public Health (Public Health) declared a local and public health emergency in response to increased spread of coronavirus across the country and six additional cases in LA County. Public Health stated that none of the new cases are from community spread, and all of these new cases were exposed to COVID-19 through close contacts. None of these cases were linked to the first case reported in LA County in January.

“These declarations are a swift response to this emergent issue and will enhance our ability to effectively manage our response,” said Supervisor Kathryn Barger, Chair of the Board of Supervisors. “These actions will allow us to have even greater coordination to protect our more than 10 million residents and prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our communities,” she added. Public Health simultaneously issued a declaration of a local public health emergency.

“My first priority is, and always will be, to protect the public health of our residents and that means ensuring we have the necessary equipment and resources in place should the threat of COVID-19 escalate in the County,” said Los Angeles County Supervisor Hilda L. Solis. “Fear will not drive our response to this virus. Rather, we will prepare and implement our proven prevention strategies to effectively protect the public.”

“We will continue to mobilize county resources, accelerate emergency planning, streamline staffing, coordinate with agencies across the county and state and federal partners, and raise awareness about how everyone can be prepared for more cases and community spread,” said Barbara Ferrer, PhD, MPH, MEd, Director of Public Health.

“As more cases are identified and community spread is detected in numerous areas, the possibility of sustained community spread of this virus in the US will increase,” said Muntu Davis, MD, MPH, Health Officer for Public Health. “Everyone and every organization has to do their part to help slow the spread of this virus.”

Public Health will be enhancing efforts to include the following:

- Testing at our Public Health Lab: Public Health is among ten California health labs to receive CDC test kits, with additional kits on the way and we will be able to test locally for COVID-19.

- Ensuring that people who are positive for novel coronavirus and their close contacts are quickly identified and closely monitored and supported while they are in isolation and/or quarantined.
- Daily radio briefing updates by the Public Health Director and Health Officer.
- New guidance for childcare facilities, schools, colleges and universities, employers, hotels, public safety responders, shelters, congregate living facilities and parents on how to prepare for and slow the spread of COVID-19.
- Weekly telebriefings with elected officials, city managers, and leaders at businesses, organizations, schools, faith-based communities and healthcare facilities (this includes over 3500 identified contacts).
- Site visits to every interim housing facility to assist the implementation of environmental practices and modifications that can reduce transmission of respiratory illness.
- Communication and preparation with our first responders, healthcare facility partners and healthcare providers to ensure continued readiness for this dynamic situation, including ensuring adequate PPE supplies for healthcare workers.
- Updating our pandemic response plan for COVID-19 in accordance with CDC guidance and local conditions.

“Our local healthcare system is well prepared to treat more cases should the need arise, particularly among vulnerable populations that require significant clinical care,” Ferrer added. “Specific guidance documents allow each of us to take steps to be prepared, including personal actions that can make a difference in disease transmission.”

And although there is no current need for significant social distancing measures in LA County, and the individual risk for contracting COVID-19 remains low for most individuals in the County, all community members should take the opportunity to plan for the possibility of more significant social distancing requirements should there be broad community spread. Personal preparation measures include:

- Having an ample supply of essentials at home (including water, food, hygiene, medications, and pet food);
- Planning for the possibility of business disruptions, school closures, and modifications/cancellations of select public events;
- Practicing simple social distancing strategies that limit your exposure to others who may be ill (verbal salutations in place of handshakes and hugs, not sharing utensils, cups and linens, staying six feet apart from others at public events).

LA County is prepared to manage and investigate suspected and confirmed cases of novel coronavirus. Public Health will continue to work closely with federal, state, and local partners to provide healthcare providers and the public with accurate information about actions to be taken to reduce the spread of novel coronavirus and to care for those who may become ill with this virus. As with other respiratory infections, there are steps that everyone can take to prevent the spread of novel coronavirus.

The best ways to prevent the spread of respiratory infections, including novel coronavirus, are:

- Stay home if you are sick. Sick people make well people sick.
- If you have mild symptoms, there may be no need to go to a medical facility to see a doctor.
- Certain patients, such as the elderly, those that are immune compromised or have underlying health conditions should call their doctor earlier.
- If you have questions, please call the clinic or your doctor before going in. If you do not have a healthcare provider, call 211 for assistance finding support near you.
- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.

- Get immunized against the flu to protect yourself and your family, and reduce the potential strain on the healthcare system, which may be impacted by COVID-19 concerns.

Public Health is also asking businesses, schools, and community-based organizations to prepare plans that allow people to stay home if they are sick (even mildly) without the risk of being academically or financially penalized. This includes the option to work from home or to complete assignments remotely, where possible. Public Health is requesting organizations do the following:

- Make sure you are using a robust, regular cleaning and disinfection schedule for frequently touched surfaces.
- Ensure that your continuity of operations (COOP) plans are up to date, so their essential functions can continue.
- Not require a doctor's note for staff returning to work after being sick, when possible. This will reduce the strain on the healthcare system. These actions will go a long way to protect individuals and healthcare services that may be affected once novel coronavirus begins to spread more widely.

Always check with trusted sources for the latest accurate information about novel coronavirus:

- Los Angeles County Department of Public Health <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/>
- California Department of Public Health <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/nCOV2019.aspx>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) <http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/novel-coronavirus-2019.html>
- World Health Organization <https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus>
- LA County residents can also call 2-1-1

The Department of Public Health is committed to promoting health equity and ensuring optimal health and well-being for all 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control, and community and family health. Nationally accredited by the Public Health Accreditation Board, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health comprises nearly 4,500 employees and has an annual budget of \$1.2 billion. To learn more about Los Angeles County Public Health, please visit www.publichealth.lacounty.gov, and follow LA County Public Health on social media at twitter.com/lapublichealth, facebook.com/lapublichealth, instagram.com/lapublichealth and youtube.com/lapublichealth.

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