



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE | 03/06/2020

Health officials confirm first case of novel coronavirus in Minnesota

Patient is recovering at home; health officials working to prevent additional cases

MEDIA ADVISORY: Governor Tim Walz and Commissioner of Health Jan Malcolm will hold a media briefing at 4 p.m. in the Governor's Reception Room of the State Capitol to provide additional information about this developing story.

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) has confirmed Minnesota's first presumptive case of novel coronavirus, COVID-19, health officials announced today.

The case is an older adult resident of Ramsey County who recently traveled on a cruise ship with a known COVID-19 case. The patient began to develop symptoms on Feb. 25 and sought health care yesterday. Samples were collected from the person and sent to the MDH Public Health Laboratory for testing today. The test was found positive earlier today. MDH is awaiting confirmatory testing from CDC, but health officials consider the presumptive results actionable.

The patient is currently in isolation at home and is recovering. MDH is working in partnership with St. Paul-Ramsey County Public Health to provide essential services and support to the patient. MDH is working to identify and contact all those who may have come in contact with the infected person. These people will be asked to quarantine themselves for 14 days from their exposure and will be monitored for fever and respiratory symptoms.

"The State of Minnesota has been working around the clock to prepare for this and I am confident that our Department of Health is up to the challenge," Minnesota Governor Tim Walz said. "Our Administration is collaborating across state agencies and remains in close contact with both federal and local partners as we monitor developments with this outbreak. Our state is fortunate to have a strong public health sector and world-class health care providers who are working hard to keep Minnesotans safe and healthy."

Minnesota Commissioner of Health Jan Malcolm said the appearance of the virus in Minnesota has been expected. Now is the time to remember that we all have the ability to help slow the spread of the illness and protect our fellow Minnesotans.

"State and local public health officials are working hard to slow the spread of this virus and protect Minnesotans, but based on how the outbreak has developed elsewhere we need to be prepared for some level of community spread," Commissioner Malcolm said. "It is critical that all of us do our part to slow the spread of this virus by covering coughs, washing hands, and staying home when sick with cold or flu-like symptoms. We also need to prepare for community

mitigation measures like telework arrangements and temporary school closures should they become necessary.”

Since the outbreak started in China in December 2019, more than 100,000 cases and 3,400 deaths have been reported in more than 80 countries. That total includes 233 U.S. cases and 14 deaths as of this morning.

MDH’s Director of Infectious Disease Kris Ehresmann said MDH is working with the CDC and Ramsey County Public Health on the case and contact investigation.

The virus that causes COVID-19 is spread by respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes, similar to how flu and other respiratory diseases spread, or when people touch surfaces that have been contaminated by an infected person, and then touch their eyes, nose or mouth.

“The most important thing Minnesotans can do right now to help protect themselves, their families and their communities is to take those tried and true, everyday steps to prevent respiratory illnesses,” Ehresmann said.

Those include:

- **Covering your coughs and sneezes** with a tissue or into your sleeve, and then throwing the tissue in the trash.
- **Washing your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds**, especially after going to the bathroom or before eating. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- **Avoid touching your face** – especially your eyes, nose and mouth - with unwashed hands.
- **Stay home if you have cold or flu-like symptoms**, and avoid close contact with people who are sick.

If COVID-19 disease begins to spread in Minnesota communities, state and local public health authorities would consider community interventions such as temporary closures of child care facilities and schools, workplace social distancing measures such as replacing in-person meetings with teleworking, and modifying, postponing or cancelling mass gatherings. Decisions about the implementation of community measures would be made by state and local officials based on CDC guidance as well as the scope of the outbreak.

More information about the coronavirus situation in Minnesota, the U.S. and internationally can be found on MDH’s [Coronavirus web site](#).

A hotline for the public has been established. The hotline is open until 8 p.m. tonight, March 6. It will be open 9 a.m. to 4:30 pm. Saturday and Sunday. The hotline number is 651-201-3920.

For more information, contact:

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