

March 14, 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COVID-19 DAILY STATUS REPORT

PLEASE NOTE: This is an evolving situation. More information will be distributed as it becomes available. For the most up to date information, please visit: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus. Additional information is available at www.countyofmerced.com/coronavirus.

CURRENT STATUS:

- As of Saturday, March 14, 2020, there are no confirmed cases of COVID-19 (novel coronavirus) in Merced County.
- In California, there are 312 active cases, five deaths and six recoveries.

RECENT ACTIVITIES:

- Although there are no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Merced County at this time, Merced County Public Health continues to coordinate with federal, state and local partners to further prepare us for any potential future impacts. This includes working with the California Department of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to monitor COVID-19.
- In coordination with the Merced County Office of Emergency Services, daily situational status calls continued today with local government agencies, schools, and healthcare professionals in our community.
- The Merced County Office of Emergency Services and Merced County Department of Public Health proclaimed a local and public health emergency Friday in order to help address the outbreak. The declaration of a local health emergency and proclamation of a local emergency will be considered for ratification by the Board of Supervisors during a special meeting next week.
- A special email group for Merced County COVID-19 updates was set up Friday and is available on the right-hand side of the countyofmerced.com/coronavirus webpage. Anyone who wants to receive daily situational updates is encouraged to sign up.
- A video was recorded/edited Friday featuring Dr. Ken Bird, Merced County's Health Officer, and will be made available on the County's social media pages, including YouTube. His message includes a status update and steps the public can take to protect themselves.
- The Merced County Office of Emergency Services held a "key position" meeting this morning (Friday). The Merced County Emergency Operations Center is activated at a Level 2 as of Friday, March 13, 2020.
- Additional guidance for food facilities was added to the "Business and Employers" tab on the countyofmerced.com/coronavirus webpage.
- The Merced County Public Health Department Operations Center was opened Jan. 27, 2020 (48 days) in order to prepare for the potential of COVID-19 in and around our community.

COVID-19 TESTING UPDATE FROM PUBLIC HEALTH:

- Despite what the media is reporting, testing is not widely available yet. This is not specific to Merced County. Testing is not widely available state or nationwide.
- The Merced County Department of Public Health (MCDPH) cannot test anyone for COVID-19. MCDPH facilitates transfer of specimen from high risk patients to the Public Health Laboratory system.
- Public Health Lab capacity is limited, and must be reserved for the highest risk patients.
- Commercial labs have capacity to test lower risk patients, but they are not collecting specimen at the lab sites. Providers must collect specimen and submit for testing.
- Emergency rooms are not accepting patients for testing only. Emergency rooms should only be used for medical emergencies.
- Asymptomatic residents cannot be tested at this time.
- Residents should call their providers with concerns if they are seeking testing and are not severely ill. Their provider will tell them if they have capacity to test. If provider tests are not available, tests are not currently available for patients who are not severely ill.
- The most efficient way to increase testing is to on board more providers to test through the commercial lab system.
- MCDPH is working with providers to increase their testing capability.

COVID-19 SYMPTOMS AND PRECAUTIONS:

- Coronavirus symptoms include: mild to severe respiratory illness, fever, cough and difficulty breathing. If symptoms develop, individuals should stay at home to limit exposure to others.
- Persons who have recently traveled to China, Japan, South Korea, Iran, or Italy, or who have had contact with a person with possible COVID-19 infection and have the above symptoms should call their local health department or health care provider immediately.
- Do not go to your provider's office without calling ahead. Do not call 911 for suspected COVID-19 unless you are having a medical emergency.
- During the flu season, there are steps you can take to protect your health and the health of those around you:
 - Wash your hands regularly with soap and water for 20 seconds.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
 - Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
 - Stay away from work, school or other people if you become sick with respiratory symptoms such as fever and cough.
 - Cover sneezes or coughs with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- **Sign up for COVID-19 alerts from Merced County by visiting www.countyofmerced.com/coronavirus and entering your email on the right side of the page.**
- Merced County Public Health COVID-19 **Information Webpage:**
 - www.countyofmerced.com/coronavirus
- Merced County Public Health **Information Line:**
 - 209-381-1180 (English, Spanish, and Hmong).

- **Email** COVID-19-specific questions to Merced County Public Health:
 - COVID19@countyofmerced.com.
- **CDC Resources for Households:**
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/home/index.html>
- Guidance for **Businesses and Employers:**
 - <https://bit.ly/2IH2G2u>

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