



Public Health Division

County of Santa Cruz

HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

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Press Release

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Santa Cruz County Public Health Prepares for the Spread of Coronavirus Disease 2019 in the U.S.

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY, CA – Santa Cruz County Public Health officials are prepared for local impacts from Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) (novel coronavirus). They are continuing efforts with regional, state and federal public health partners as the virus continues to spread, including what may be the first case spread in the United States (U.S) in a person who reportedly did not have relevant travel history or exposure to another known patient with COVID-19.

Even though there are zero confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Santa Cruz County, Public Health is facilitating preparedness efforts to assure effective communitywide response to any future cases. This includes initiating coordination with hospitals, clinics and providers; identifying resources needed to treat patients and limit disease transmission; and reviewing pandemic preparedness plans.

“While the immediate risk to our community is believed to be low at this time, everyone can do their part to respond to this emerging health threat,” said Dr. Gail Newel, Santa Cruz County Health Officer. “Our Public Health Division is working with other county agencies, health care providers and community partners to take the necessary steps to protect the health and safety of our residents.”

As of February 27, 2020, 15 cases have been confirmed in the U.S. In addition, 45 cases were among the persons repatriated to the United States from the Diamond Princess Cruise Ship who are currently in quarantine on military bases or in hospitals. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) is closely monitoring the outbreak.

“Preparing for an outbreak in our local area requires the whole community to work together,” said Kathleen Conley, Santa Cruz County Health Services Agency staff overseeing the Public Health Emergency Preparedness program.

In order to reduce the risk of domestic virus transmission, the federal government has imposed travel restrictions for people returning from China, including denying entry to non-residents who have traveled to China within the past 14 days unless they are relatives of U.S. citizens or residents. U.S. citizens returning from Hubei Province in China are subject to a mandatory 14-day quarantine. Symptomatic U.S. citizens returning from other parts of mainland China are also subject to quarantine.

Santa Cruz County Public Health is committed to preventing the spread of coronavirus in the community. Any risk assessments are based on travel history and contacts, not race, ethnicity, or culture. Travel restrictions may change as COVID-19 spreads, and will be guided by the Centers for Disease Control.

The Santa Cruz County Public Health Division advises residents to reduce their risk of getting sick by taking measures typical of other seasonal colds or flu viruses, including:

- Wash hands regularly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds;
- Cover your cough or sneeze using proper technique;
- Stay home and avoid public or crowded areas if you are sick;
- Get your flu shot to protect against flu or symptoms similar to COVID-19; and
- If you have recently returned from regions with ongoing COVID-19 impacts, monitor your health and immediately contact your physician if you experience flu-like symptoms.

You can also prepare for the possible disruption caused by an outbreak:

- Make sure you have a supply of all essential medications for your entire family;
- Make a child care plan if you or a caregiver are sick;
- Make arrangements about how your family will manage a school closure; and
- Make a plan for how you can care for a sick family member without getting sick yourself.

The COVID-19 outbreak is an emerging, rapidly evolving situation, and preparedness and response information may change quickly. The Public Health Division will provide updated information as it becomes available.

Stay up to date on this rapidly evolving situation by visiting <https://www.santacruzhealth.org/Coronavirus> and the CDC's website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov>.

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