



PRESS RELEASE

March 19, 2020

PORTAGE COUNTY DECLARES STATE OF EMERGENCY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

This afternoon, I have declared a state of emergency in Portage County due to the number of challenging circumstances that we all find ourselves in. It is clear that, though we have no confirmed cases in Portage County as of today, the impacts to our community will be significant. In fact, they already are. The county also needs to be positioned to adapt to any other changes that we will encounter in the near- or long-term, and this declaration helps us do that.

I am heartened to see our community's response to COVID-19 as well as the responses from our municipal leaders here in the county. The proactive steps that local leaders are taking, and the continued advocacy on our behalf from our state representatives are all very important steps to take in these earlier stages of our attempts to "flatten the curve" (i.e. slow down the spread of COVID-19) and to help our local health care systems and providers be better positioned to protect the health and wellbeing of their employees, their patients, and the entire community. We will see more coordinated responses across the community in the coming days, and Portage County will be helping those efforts in every way we can.

Some may be wondering if the county is going to shut down. I can tell you now, that my intention is to keep the county functioning and providing essential services to the public throughout this public health emergency. That is what we are here for, to serve the public.

We are facing some serious challenges, and in the very near future you will begin to see a response across county departments aimed at protecting the safety, health, and welfare of the public and employees during this public health emergency. The steps we will take will ensure that we are able to provide services in the safest and healthiest work environment possible under these conditions.

At this point, the only thing that we know for certain is that the situation will continue to change. The county and the entire community will need to be patient, flexible, and calm in our approach so that we keep our focus on where it should be—helping each other get through this, together. We are all on the front lines in this effort, and we are counting on guidance and direction from state and federal leaders to help direct the effort. Thankfully, we are seeing that with the state’s overall response as well as the actions taken by Congress and the President this week.

Moving forward, the county will continue to work with our partners across the community, and we will be doing all we can to provide the support our community needs. Declaring a state of emergency is a very important piece of that, as it builds awareness across the community of the seriousness of the situation. It’s also important that we all do our part to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19. You can find the latest updates and guidance on the Wisconsin Department of Health Services website as well as Portage County’s COVID-19 webpage, which the public can get to by going to the county’s home page: <https://www.co.portage.wi.us/home>

Thank you,

Chris Holman
Portage County Executive

Attached you will find Executive Order 2020-1 which outlines County Executive Holman’s declaration of a state of emergency in Portage County.

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