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Emmons County Public Health Preparing for Possibility of COVID-19

March 6, 2020 – LINTON, ND – Emmons County Public Health is preparing for the possibility of COVID-19 in the community, while also asking people to be conscious of the influenza virus already spreading throughout the county.

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), COVID-19 (Coronavirus 2019) is a respiratory disease caused by a novel (new) coronavirus named SARS-CoV-2. COVID-19 was first detected in China, and has subsequently spread to more than 96 countries and territories, including the United States.

“COVID-19 isn’t something we have a long, established track record of dealing with,” said Emmons County Public Health administrator Bev Voller. “We are constantly learning about it, and at a national and global scale. Because of this, we don’t have some of that knowledge base to rely on, like when we are dealing with measles or influenza.”

COVID-19 is thought to be spreading person-to-person through respiratory droplets that are produced when an infected individual sneezes or coughs. These droplets land in the mouths or noses of someone nearby. Droplets that land on surfaces may infect someone who touches that surface and then touches their own mouth, nose or eyes. However, how easily the virus spreads appears to vary with factors such as distance to an infected individual, length of time of exposure, and consistency of exposure within that length of time.

Statistics are constantly evolving with this virus, as health officials the nation and the world attempt to combat a potential pandemic. As of March 6, 19 states had reported individuals testing positive for COVID-19, including 11 deaths. The majority of these deaths occurred in Washington, at a long term care facility in King County.

As of March 6, the North Dakota Department of Health has monitored 18 people for the respiratory disease. Thirteen of the individuals proved asymptomatic following a 14-day monitoring period, while four individuals are presently being monitored. North Dakota has not yet had an individual test positive for COVID-19.

The State Health Department has provided a survey and resources for individuals who have recently traveled to countries with heightened travel alerts. As of March 6, the countries included in these alerts were China, Hong Kong, Iran, Italy, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam. Individuals who have traveled to these countries, or traveled to other international destinations, should go to

https://ndhealth.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eb7sJjKhR2UfB7n to take the survey and utilize the pertaining information. If you believe you may have COVID-19, contact Emmons County Public Health at (701) 254-4027, or the State Health Department at (701) 328-2378 or (800) 472-2180.

The symptoms of COVID-19 range from mild, and even no symptoms, to pneumonia and death. CDC reports three symptoms that may appear 2-14 days after exposure: fever, cough and/or shortness of breath. Presently, it appears that the virus is most dangerous to individuals who are age 65+, who have underlying health issues, or who have weakened immune systems. A vaccine has not yet been developed to prevent the disease, and availability could be as far off as 12 to 18 months.

“Fortunately, there are steps that anyone can take that will greatly help reduce the spread of COVID-19,” said Voller. “Not only are these steps good for this emerging disease, but they are also things you can do to help stay healthy in the midst of influenza season. However, for individuals to fight influenza, we also recommend getting a flu shot every year.”

The following preventative recommendations will help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases:

- Avoid close contact with individuals who are sick.
- Avoid touching your T-zone (eyes, nose and mouth).
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue and then throw the tissue in the trash. If you do not have a tissue handy, cough or sneeze into your elbow.
- Follow CDC’s recommendations for using a facemask. People who are well are not recommended to wear a facemask. Facemasks should be used by individuals who show symptoms of COVID-19. The use of facemasks is also crucial for health workers and people who are taking care of someone in close settings of a health care facility or at home.
- Stay home from school or work if you are sick.
- Wash your hands with soap for at least 20 seconds often (after going to the bathroom, before eating, after blowing your nose, coughing, sneezing, etc.).

For information about COVID-19 from the North Dakota Department of Health, visit <https://www.health.nd.gov/diseases-conditions/coronavirus>. For information from the CDC, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>. Information about influenza can be found at www.cdc.gov/flu and www.ndflu.com.

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