

March 26, 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 Thursday, March 26, 2020, there are four confirmed cases of COVID-19 (novel coronavirus) in Merced County.
- Like the first two cases, the third and fourth cases (announced today, March 26) were acquired outside of Merced County. Based on information provided by the individuals, Public Health staff will assess risks of exposure and contact any affected individuals. To date, three of the four confirmed Merced County cases are individuals under the age of 40.
- Due to privacy laws, the Public Health Department cannot release identifying information related to positive cases.
- A total of 58 people within Merced County have been tested within the public health system. That number does not include additional testing through the commercial lab system, hospitals and clinics. Although the Merced County Department of Public Health (MCDPH) isn't provided numbers on how many tests go through those systems, MCDPH will be notified of any positive tests.
- In California, there are 3,082 active cases and 67 deaths.

RECENT ACTIVITIES:

- Merced County Public Health continues to coordinate with federal, state and local partners to further prepare us for 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 March 13 in order to help address the outbreak. The Board of Supervisors ratified those actions during a March 16 special meeting. On March 19, Governor Gavin Newsom announced Executive Order N-33-20, asking California residents to stay at home. On March 20, Merced County's Health Officer also issued an Order directing County residents to remain in their places of residence except to perform or receive essential services.
- The Merced County Public Health Department Operations Center was opened Jan. 27, 2020 (60 days) in order to prepare for COVID-19 in and around our community. The Merced County Emergency Operations Center is activated at a Level 1.

COVID-19 TESTING UPDATE:

- Within the public health system, every person who has met CDC criteria for severe disease within Merced County has been tested. Testing has been limited across the state of California, as noted multiple times by state officials as a barrier to response.
- Public Health is actively identifying other methods to enhance testing capability for providers throughout the community and increase testing county-wide. We will continue to be notified should positive tests come through either system (public health or commercial).
- Today, March 26, staff held another soft opening for a “mobile specimen collection site” for COVID-19. Plans are still in development, but as-needed moving forward, these sites will be established on the eastside and westside of the County in order to expedite testing. PLEASE NOTE: Use of these mobile testing sites is by appointment only, and you must be referred there by Public Health prior to visiting. Anyone without prior approval will not be tested.

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:**www.countyofmerced.com/coronavirus
- 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. Live reps. available 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.)
- **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>
 - www.covid19.ca.gov
- Report **Price Gouging:**
 - <http://www.countyofmerced.com/3381/Price-Gouging>
- Report **Consumer Fraud:**
 - www.countyofmerced.com/2322/Consumer-Fraud