

Friday, February 28, 2020 – 10:30 am

On Feb. 25<sup>th</sup>, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) confirmed COVID-19 a case in northern California, who reportedly did not have relevant travel history or exposure to another known patient with COVID-19 (e.g. unknown exposure). CDC continues to investigate the individuals contacts to determine the source of their exposure. At this time, COVID-19 is NOT currently spreading in the community in the US. However, this case POTENTIALLY represents the first sign that there could be unknown individuals with COVID-19 in the US which would increase the chances of spreading of the virus in the community. For the general American public, who are unlikely to be exposed to the virus at this time, the immediate health risk from COVID-19 is considered LOW. However, it is important to note that the current global circumstances suggest it is likely that this virus is able to infect people easily and spread from person to person in an efficient and sustained way.

Now is the time for employers, businesses, schools and individuals to review/develop Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP) and personal preparedness plans to prepare for the potential of increased absenteeism, potential isolated closures/quarantines and other disruptions caused by the virus. THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT WIDESPREAD IMPACTS IN OUR AREA ARE GOING TO OCCUR, just that it is better to begin to prepare now in case they do occur. There are several helpful links listed at the bottom of this email and additional information is available from the CDC (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>) and the Virginia Department of Health (VDH).

Current advice on the best way to prevent the spread of COVID-19 is exactly the same advice to prevent the spread of colds and flu. **Practice good hand hygiene and cough etiquette. Everyone should wash their hands with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizers regularly. Those that develop a cough or a sneeze should do so into a tissue or the inside of their elbow, washing their hands afterwards.**

- The situation continues to be rapidly evolving. VDH has setup a web page specifically for coronavirus – [www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus). This site has up-to-date information about the situation in Virginia as well as direct links to CDC information.
- As of 2/27/20 the World Health Organization (WHO) is reporting 82,294 confirmed cases worldwide. 47 countries are now reporting confirmed cases, with the majority still found in China.
- As of Feb. 26<sup>th</sup>, in the US, there are currently 14 cases (confirmed and detected in the US ) cases of COVID-19, with the known cases being found in 7 states (MA IL, WI, WA, CA , AZ & TX). Additionally, there are 45 cases confirmed in persons repatriated to the US (e.g. evacuated from China (3) or the Diamond Princess Cruise Ship (42)).
- It is expected that additional cases will be identified in the coming days. The CDC risk assessment to the US general public continues to be low. However, it is important to note that the current global circumstances suggest it is likely that this virus is able to infect people easily and spread from person to person in an efficient and sustained way. If this proves true in the US as well, the risk assessment will likely be different.
- No cases of COVID-19 have been identified in VA at this time. In VA, 8 individuals have been tested for COVID-19. 6 tested negative for the virus and 2 cases are pending test results.
- In VA, 179 travelers (e.g. they have recently returned from China) are/have been under Public Health Monitoring. At this time, Public Health deems 9 to be at low risk and 59 to be at medium risk for COVID-19, monitoring has been completed on 108. (Note: breakdown information from CDC site currently adds to 176 travelers while their total monitored is listed as 179). It is

important to note that these individuals are not currently suspected of having COVID-19, they are just being monitored closer than the general public because they have travelled from China.

- As mentioned before, It's important to note that we are still in flu season – flu is currently considered widespread in VA. As of the Feb 27<sup>th</sup> VDH Weekly Influenza report, 8,443 case of flu had been reported in VA this flu season and VDH had received 773 pneumonia and flu related death reports. The VDH recommends everyone take 3 actions to prevent further spread of influenza:
  - Get vaccinated every year – if you haven't already gotten your flu shot this year, it is not too late.
  - **Practice good hand hygiene and cough etiquette. Everyone should wash their hands with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizers regularly. Those that develop a cough or a sneeze should do so into a tissue or the inside of their elbow, washing their hands afterwards.**
  - Take antivirals as prescribed by your healthcare provider if you do become sick.
- While they are still learning how COVID-19 is transmitted, it is likely that it will also be determined to be transmitted through coughing, sneezing or close personal contact just like the flu. Again, good hand hygiene and cough etiquette is likely a good way to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Helpful links on Coronavirus:
  - CDC – fact sheet – <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/2019-ncov-factsheet.pdf>
  - CDC interim guidance for businesses and employers to plan/respond to COVID-19 - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-business-response.html>
  - VHD guidance for k-12 schools - [http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/content/uploads/sites/13/2020/02/VDH-2019-n-CoV-K-12-Guidance\\_FINAL\\_02042020.pdf](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/content/uploads/sites/13/2020/02/VDH-2019-n-CoV-K-12-Guidance_FINAL_02042020.pdf)
  - Get Your Family Ready for Pandemic Flu - <https://www.cdc.gov/nonpharmaceutical-interventions/pdf/gr-pan-flu-ind-house.pdf>

Moving forward, my plan is to provide a weekly update unless circumstances warrant a more frequent update. The VDH webpage [www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus) is the best source for up-to-date information.