

Friday, January 31, 2020 – 12:30 pm

Listened in on a conference call with the Virginia Dept. of Health (VDH) this morning, several items that might be of interest/use since the last update:

- The situation continues to be rapidly evolving. VDH has setup a web page specifically for coronavirus – 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 1/30/20, 6 cases have been confirmed in the US (in WA, IL, CA, AZ).
- As of noon today, 5 people have now been tested for 2019-nCoV (2019 Novel Coronavirus) in Virginia. At this time, 2 have tested negative and results are still pending for the other 3.
- There is now 1 confirmed case of direct person-to-person transmission in the US. The person was the spouse of someone who had contracted 2019-nCoV while in China.
- As of 1/31, 2019-nCoV is not spreading in the community in the US (e.g. no reports of spreading just due to general casual contact in the community). The immediate risk to the general public is low. People exposed directly to ill persons are at greater risk (e.g. family members and healthcare workers caring for patients with 2019-nCoV).
- As of 1/30, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) is estimating that 2019-nCoV is about as or just slightly more contagious than the “regular” flu. In comparison, the measles are about 12-18 times more contagious than the “regular” flu.
- As mentioned before, It’s important to note that we are still in flu season – flu is currently considered widespread in VA. 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 2019-nCoV 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 – which is also a form of coronavirus. Again, good hand hygiene and cough etiquette is likely a good way to prevent the spread of 2019-nCoV.

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 is the best source for up-to-date information.