

LLANO COUNTY PRESS RELEASE

OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

COVID-19 (New Coronavirus)



FOR IMMEDIATE DISTRIBUTION

March 13, 2020

Governor Greg Abbott issued a state-wide disaster declaration today in response to the COVID-19 virus pandemic. Llano County's response to this serious health concern began in January when the Llano County Judge, Office of Emergency Management and the Llano County Local Health Authority began meeting and are in constant communications and working with State elected officials, our Mayors, Sheriff's Office, Llano ISD, as well as the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), and the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) to prepare for and respond to the COVID-19 virus.

Llano County is utilizing a phased approach of monitoring and reporting of COVID-19:

- Phase 1: Persons Under Monitoring (PUM)
- Phase 2: Persons Under Investigation (Testing in Progress) (PUI)
- Phase 3: Confirmed Case (No Person-to-Person spread)
- Phase 4: Limited Person-to-Person Spread (Close/Household Contacts)
- Phase 5: Person-to-Person Spread in the Community

At this time, Llano County does not have any persons in any of the Phases of monitoring or reporting, we have no known cases of COVID-19 and no known patients being tested for COVID-19 in Llano County.

To date, 42 cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed in Texas, with the closest cases in Travis and Bexar Counties. As the number of test kits are distributed throughout Texas and laboratories increase their testing capacity, more individuals will be able to undergo testing and the number of confirmed cases is anticipated to rise. It is imperative our citizens continue to stay informed and not alarmed as they continue their individual efforts to maintain high standards of personal hygiene.

In the event an individual is confirmed to have COVID-19, DSHS will immediately notify the Llano County Public Health Officer, the Llano County Judge and the Mayor of the city the case is confirmed in and additional measures will be implemented.

It is important citizens understand that all persons who are being monitored and diagnosed have specific regulations protecting the privacy of their health information under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), therefore a patient's protected information will not be provided to the public.

Llano County continues to aggressively monitor and evaluate this evolving situation to assure appropriate protections are in place and there are no impediments to providing an immediate response in the event any of our citizens are affected by the COVID-19 virus. At this time, we have not made any additional changes to current regulations around mass gatherings or other public health standards but will keep the public updated if this information changes.

While Llano County has statutory authority for mass gatherings of 2,500 or more persons in the unincorporated areas of the county, we will continue to work with our city officials to prepare and respond to events that have been issued permits within their municipalities. This is and will continue to be a collaborative effort with our local, state and federal public health and health care partners.

While community transmission has not been detected in Llano County, we urge everyone to follow basic preventative measures as for any respiratory virus, which includes:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick. If you experience difficulty breathing, or persistent fever, call your primary care provider.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue or your sleeve.
- Frequently clean and disinfect touched objects and surfaces.

If you have symptoms of respiratory illness including cough, fever and shortness of breath, please contact your health care provider. It is important to call ahead before arriving at a clinic, urgent care or emergency department to avoid potential spread.

Minimizing exposure is especially important for people who are 65 or older or who have an underlying health condition like heart disease, lung disease, diabetes, high blood pressure or cancer. People in those groups have a higher risk of developing severe disease if they do get COVID-19, and the safest thing for them during an outbreak will be to stay home as much as possible and minimize close contact with other people. Preparation is crucial; therefore, they should consider speaking with their doctor about getting additional prescription medications and have enough household items and groceries on hand to stay home as needed.

For additional information reference Llano County's preparation and response, please see www.co.llano.tx.us or contact Emergency Management Coordinator- Gilbert Bennett at 325-247-2039 or email at gbennett@co.llano.tx.us.

DSHS has additional information on the COVID-19 for the public, health care professionals, health departments and labs at www.dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus

####