VENTURA COUNTY
PUBLIC HEALTH

A Department of Ventura County Health Care Agency

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Ventura County Public Health Press Release
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County of Ventura Declares Local Health Emergency in Response to Novel Coronavirus Activity

Ventura, CA - Today, the Ventura County Public Health Department declared a local health emergency in response to 1) increased spread of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) across the country 2) in alignment with the Governor of California's Declared State of Emergency and mass gathering guidance 3) an increase of local cases. There are currently 3 travel related cases in Ventura County. As of today, 95 people have been tested by the Ventura County Public Health Lab for COVID-19, 2 results are pending confirmation and 22 travelers are on home quarantine.

"This declaration will enhance our ability to take further lifesaving actions as we continue to respond to this evolving health and safety threat," said County CEO, Mike Powers. "These actions will allow us to have even greater coordination to protect our residents and prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our communities. We will continue to mobilize county resources, coordinate with agencies and partners and raise awareness about how everyone can take action to be prepared."

"Although there is still no person to person transmission in our County, my first priority is to protect the public health of our residents by taking proactive measures," said Ventura County Public Health Officer, Doctor Robert Levin. "We encourage community members and organizations to do their part to help slow the spread of this virus. Our local healthcare system is well prepared to treat more cases should the need arise, particularly among vulnerable populations that require significant clinical care," said Doctor Levin. "Specific guidance documents allow each of us to take steps to be prepared, including personal actions that can make a difference in disease transmission," said Doctor Levin.

The state's public health experts have released new guidance that non-essential gatherings should be limited to no more than 250 people, while smaller events can proceed only if the organizers can implement social distancing of 6 feet per person. Gatherings of individuals who are at risk for severe illness from COVID-19 should be limited to no more than 10 people, while also following social distancing plans. The full policy can be viewed here.

Ventura County is prepared to manage and investigate suspected and confirmed cases of COVID-19. Public Health will continue to work closely with federal, state, and local partners to provide healthcare providers and the public with accurate information about actions to be taken to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and to care for those who may become ill with this virus. As with other respiratory infections, there are steps that everyone can take to prevent the spread of novel coronavirus.

The best ways to prevent the spread of respiratory infections, including COVID-19, are:

- Stay home if you are sick. Sick people make well people sick.

- If you have mild symptoms, there may be no need to go to a medical facility to see a doctor.
- Certain patients, such as the elderly, those that are immune compromised or have underlying health conditions should call their doctor.
- Primary care doctors are the point of contact for COVID-19 testing. You do not need to call Public Health to request COVID-19 testing. Your doctor will make the decision to test at one of the local private labs and if the test is positive your doctor will contact Public Health for confirmation.
- If you have questions, please call the clinic or your doctor before going in. If you do not have a healthcare provider, call 211 for assistance finding support near you.
- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Get immunized against the flu to protect yourself and your family, and reduce the potential strain on the healthcare system, which may be impacted by COVID-19 concerns.

Public Health is also asking businesses, schools, and community-based organizations to begin to implement plans that allow people to stay home if they are sick or vulnerable to the disease. This includes the option to work from home or to complete assignments remotely, where possible. The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) provides guidance on how to prepare and protect Californians from COVID-19. Ventura County Public Health urges organizations to review and implement guidance from CDPH.

Guidance can be found at: https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Guidance.aspx. This includes guidance for:

- Health care facilities, including long-term care facilities
- Community care facilities, including assisted living facilities and childcare
- Schools and institutions of higher education (Governor Newsom, during a press conference today, made clear that most K-12 schools will remain open).
- Event organizers
- First responders, including paramedics and EMTs
- Employers, health care workers and workers in general industry
- Health care plans
- Home cleaning with COVID-19 positive individuals
- Guidance for Using Disinfectants at Schools and Child Cares
- Health care facilities from Cal/OSHA/Laboratories
- Homeless Service Providers

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