Alcohol and Gambling Enforcement

Bureau of Criminal Apprehension

Driver and Vehicle Services

Emergency Communication Networks

Homeland Security and Emergency Management

Minnesota State Patrol

Office of Communications

Office of Justice Programs

Office of Pipeline Safety

Office of Traffic Safety

State Fire Marshal

NEWS RELEASE

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SEOC Update #10: Minnesotans Stepping Up to Help Others as COVID-19 Planning, Response Continues Statewide

ST. PAUL —Minnesotans and Minnesota companies continue stepping up and helping others during the COVID-19 outbreak as state officials and volunteer agencies continue working to make sure health care officials are ready for the predicted influx of COVID-19 patients across the state.

“Battling this pandemic is a team sport and Minnesotans are stepping up to the plate in a big way,” said Joe Kelly, director of the Department of Public Safety’s Homeland Security and Emergency Management division (HSEM).

Staff from state agencies and volunteer organizations continue working from the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) to keep Minnesotans safe and coordinate efforts to provide essential services and information during the COVID-19 pandemic. The SEOC was activated to support state agencies with their COVID-19 response following Gov. Tim Walz’s executive order issuing a Peacetime State of Emergency in response to the pandemic.

SEOC focusing on local needs for PPE and additional hospital beds

The SEOC remains fully activated and staffed either physically or virtually by all state agencies and several volunteer organizations.

- Alternate care facility planning continues with ongoing assessments of possible facilities. Planning includes determining staffing of these facilities should they be needed.
- The SEOC continues to focus on personal protective equipment (PPE) and items needed for health care professionals.
- The SEOC continues to support the state hotline. State employees are staffing the hotline and are answering calls from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily at either 651-297-1304 or 800-657-3504. Hotline staff answered 370 calls on Monday.
    - Many of the questions coming in to the hotline are related to unemployment insurance issues.
    - A portion of the calls to the state hotline are from people reporting possible violations of Gov. Walz’s stay at home order. Callers are being directed to local officials. All Minnesotans are urged to voluntarily comply with the stay at home order. The state is working with local law enforcement to support the order.

Here are today’s updates and actions from state agencies and volunteer organizations:

As April holidays approach, Department of Health reminding Minnesotans to stay at home

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) is seeing an increase in COVID-19 cases in Minnesota. As holidays in April approach, MDH strongly urges Minnesotans to keep up the effort to stay at home and avoid gatherings with anyone outside of their household group.

This includes having only telephonic or virtual visits with loved ones in nursing homes or assisted living. This is essential to help limit the spread of the outbreak in Minnesota communities, and it is essential as a tool to help protect the state’s most vulnerable Minnesotans — elderly and those with severe underlying health conditions.

26 people in Minnesota hospitalized in intensive care

Global/National Update

- Worldwide: 801,400 cases and 38,700 deaths.
- U.S.: 164,610 cases (NY: 75,795; NJ: 16,636; CA: 7,452; MI: 6,498; MA: 5,752) and over 3,100 deaths (914 in New York).

Minnesota Update

- Total of 629 lab-confirmed cases in Minnesota – up 53 cases from Monday, March 30.
    - 12 reported deaths; average age is 86.
    - Since the start of the outbreak, 112 patients in Minnesota have been hospitalized.
    - 56 patients currently hospitalized with 26 in intensive care; the rest are recovering at home.
    - See the latest situation report on the Minnesota Department of Health's website.
- There were 558 calls to MDH public hotline on March 30. The public hotline is open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. The number is 651-201-3920.
- There were 671,485 visits to MDH COVID-19 website on March 30.

Minnesotans continue making personal sacrifices during COVID-19 outbreak

The Salvation Army has reported to HSEM a donation of N-95 face masks that reminds us all of the personal sacrifices being made during the COVID-19 pandemic. Volunteers were recently approached by a couple who handed over a gallon-sized bag with three masks, neatly packaged inside. It was accompanied by a note that read: "Sorry, these three looks not good, but we never weared it. We just put in our backpack. Sorry. Thank you for taking care of us. God Bless us!"

Outdoor warning sirens will sound as usual at 1 p.m. Wednesday

The outdoor warning sirens will sound across Minnesota as usual at 1 p.m. on Wednesday. The emergency alert system test that appears on televisions statewide will also happen. Officials are reminding Minnesotans not to be alarmed. Severe weather season is fast approaching so officials need to continue testing the sirens to ensure they work.

All motorcycle training courses canceled through June 1

The Minnesota Motorcycle Safety Center (MMSC) is canceling all motorcycle training courses through June 1 at all Minnesota State training sites statewide due to COVID-19 concerns. Riders who have registered for these courses will be contacted by the training site for refund or rescheduling information. Once motorcycle training courses resume, class sizes will be limited to eight students instead of 12 to keep the total number of people on the range at any time to 10. Two instructors teach each course. MMSC instructors will sanitize motorcycles after each course. MMSC will provide additional updates if anything changes.

Minnesota 911 dispatch centers receiving fewer calls during COVID-19

According to statistics provided by CenturyLink to the Department of Public Safety division of Emergency Communication Networks (DPS-ECN), call volumes for Minnesota public safety answering points (PSAPS), also known as 911 dispatch centers, are down for the third week of March compared to the same time period last year.

- In 2019, Minnesota PSAPs received 53,021 calls for the third week of March.
- In 2020, Minnesota PSAPs answered 48,984 calls for the third week of March.

Minnesota State Patrol PSAPs are reporting a similar trend.

- State Patrol (Roseville and Rochester PSAPs) answered 4,123 calls for the third week in March 2019.
- State Patrol (Roseville and Rochester PSAPs) received 2,970 calls for the third week in March 2020.

Domestic violence programs are essential safety services

Domestic violence programs remain open to serve people experiencing relationship abuse. If you are experiencing violence, call the Minnesota Day One Crisis Line — a statewide 24-hour hotline for victims of domestic abuse, sexual assault and sex trafficking — at 866-223-1111, you can also text 612-399-9995, or visit their website.

Schools have served more than 1.2 million meals to Minnesota students

- MDE has asked districts and charter schools to self-report the daily number of meals they are serving to the school communities and the number of students receiving school-age care.
    - The final count over the eight-day planning period, with about 280 school districts and charter schools reporting, are:
        - 1,227,220 meals served
        - 3,276 average school-age students cared for each day
- More information can be found on the MDE website.

Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs) canceled for remainder of school year

- The U.S. Department of Education has officially granted a waiver to Minnesota for the federally mandated standardized statewide assessments requirement. As a result, the Minnesota Department of Education is officially cancelling the MCAs for the reminder of the 2019-2020 school year.
- More information can be found on the MDE website.

Red Cross in Minnesota: Blood drive changes to support safety for donors and staff

- To better manage local and national blood supply and social distancing practices, the Minnesota Red Cross is moving to an appointments only process for all blood drives and donation centers. This will be in effect for the next two weeks, starting today March 31 through April 11.
- To support social distancing with the COVID-19 safety protocols, the Minnesota Red Cross bloodmobiles will stop collecting blood from April 1 through May 1. Blood collection will continue at donation centers and larger spaces thanks to donation sponsors, including the Minnesota National Guard.
- To ensure the health of employees, volunteers and staff, our health and safety precautions in place now include blood drive and donation center staff wearing basic face masks.
- We encourage healthy individuals to keep scheduled blood donation appointments and to make new blood donation appointments for the weeks ahead by using the Red Cross Blood Donor App, visiting RedCrossBlood.org or calling 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767).

Minnesota Department of Human Rights reminds Minnesotans there's no room for housing discrimination

- Your landlord cannot discriminate against you, kick you out, or ask you to leave your apartment because of fears and stigma around COVID-19, including discrimination or harassment on the basis of actual or perceived race, national origin, disability, or other protected classes.
    - If you are facing discrimination and harassment by your landlord, please call the Minnesota Department of Human Rights at 651-539-1133, 800-657-3704, or email the Department at info.mdhr@state.mn.us, or complete the online form.
- Here's more information about housing discrimination and evictions protections developed by Minnesota Housing and the Minnesota Department of Human Rights.

PPE and face mask COVID-19 donations

During the COVID-19 pandemic, there are several ways HSEM is working with partners to collect personal protective equipment (PPE) such as facemasks, respirators, face shields, gloves and gowns.

- If you own a large- to medium-sized business and want to donate any of those PPE items, the Salvation Army will accept donations at a site in Roseville (2445 Prior Ave. N.).

- If you're an individual who would like to donate, HSEM asks that you contact your county or tribal emergency manager. Find your local emergency manager using this interactive map.
- Review four other ways you can take action during COVID-19 on our State Emergency Operations Center website.

Traffic volumes remain significantly below 2019 levels

The Minnesota Department of Transportation continues to monitor traffic volumes statewide.

- Statewide: Traffic volumes on March 30 were down 34 percent compared to Monday averages for March 2019.
    - Mondays have continued to see a downward trend, from -1 percent on March 9 and -8 percent on March 16.
- Metro area: Traffic volumes on March 30 were down 40 percent compared to Monday averages for March 2019.

Minnesota Housing reiterates message: Evictions temporarily suspended, but rent still due

The Governor's Executive Order 20-14 suspends evictions and writs of recovery for the term of the COVID-19 peacetime emergency.

- This executive order keeps people stably housed and prevents displacement during this health emergency. Though evictions are temporarily suspended, rent is still due. Nothing in the order relieves a tenant's obligation to pay rent.
- Minnesota Housing strongly encourages renters to communicate early with their landlord about a potential shortfall. Counties may be able to assist with emergency assistance. Property owners often rely on timely rental payments to cover property expenses, debt payments, certain utilities, and debt service. Rental collections, reductions, or waivers are at the discretion of the property owner.
- Similarly, homeowners are encouraged to contact their lenders in the event of anticipated shortfalls. The Governor has recommended $10 million for the Family Homelessness Prevention and Assistance Program which would provide direct cash assistance for housing payments, utilities and other housing-related expenses, which Minnesota Housing supports.
- On its website, Minnesota Housing has provided a summary of the order and answers to Frequently Asked Questions for tenants, property owners, and homeowners.

Cots delivered to St. Louis County

The Minnesota National Guard delivered 250 cots to St. Louis County. County officials requested the cots to support additional flexibility.

Multi-agency team flies to northeastern Minnesota to assess alternative health care sites

The Minnesota National Guard provided aviation support to a multi-agency survey team featuring the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Minnesota Department of Health and the Minnesota National Guard as they traveled to northeast Minnesota to assess potential alternate care facility sites. The use of National Guard aviation assets allows the team to reach all areas of the state quickly to assess facilities up-close, evaluate suitability and make recommendations should we need to expand available medical capacity as COVID-19 continues to expand.