PRESS RELEASES

Governor directs state government agencies to minimize face-to-face contact while continuing service delivery

Mar 15, 2020 | Press Releases

Public health and safety services unaffected

SANTA FE – Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham on Sunday issued a directive to all state agencies to accelerate remote-work initiatives in the wake of the COVID-19 public health emergency and to temporarily adjust, and in some cases suspend, certain functions in order to minimize public health risks.

“We’re asking every state employee to continue serving the public. Some can do that best by coming to the office and delivering indispensable services – and some can do that best by working from home and protecting the public health,” said Gov. Lujan Grisham. “We are emphasizing social distancing with minimal disruption to services – and that’s what we recommend for all.

“Right now, the message to New Mexicans must be clear: Avoid social gatherings, wash your hands, and bottom line, **stay home**. That’s the best thing we can all do to protect each other’s health.”

As part of the directive, New Mexico state agencies will make adjustments to their operations, including the following actions:

- Closing all state museums, state historic sites, state parks and cultural institutions to the public effective Monday morning; state visitors centers were previously closed to the public

- In government offices that provide direct service (for example, MVD), limiting staff and moving to an alternative or remote model of service; all other state government buildings and leased state offices are closed to the public

- Completing the transition of all employees who are able to work remotely to a remote work model

Through this directive, the state of New Mexico will continue to provide a robust set of services to people across the state while limiting the opportunity for person-to-person contact. Public health experts advise that social isolation is the most important strategy for containing and mitigating the spread of COVID-19.

The governor has encouraged local governments to follow suit and implement telework policies for as many employees as possible and take other steps to limit person-to-person contact in order to emphasize social distancing.

The governor's directive affects only employees of state government's executive branch and excludes those deemed essential to public health and safety and to protecting vulnerable populations. This includes state police, corrections officers, the National Guard, and public health workers, for example. It does not include the courts.

The Mid-Region Council of Governments (MRCOG) and Rio Metro Transit District have also directed that the Rail Runner will cease operations for the duration of the public emergency.

The governor's directive follows previous orders declaring a state of emergency, banning large social gatherings, sharply curtailing visits to nursing homes, and closing public schools through April 3.

"We continue to adapt as the situation changes, choosing needed, measured responses to stay a step ahead of the virus," Gov. Lujan Grisham said. "We've already asked New Mexicans to avoid social contact wherever possible. We are now trying to reduce social contact for as many of our 17,000 state government employees as possible."

As of Saturday, 13 New Mexicans had tested positive for COVID-19 in four counties: Bernalillo, Sandoval, Santa Fe and Socorro. These numbers are expected to rise as

the state Health Department's Scientific Laboratory Division and private partner TriCore Reference Laboratories increase capacity for test processing.

The Department of Health and the governor encourage all New Mexicans to practice social distancing procedures: **stay home**, *particularly* if you are sick.

Every New Mexican must work together to stem the spread of COVID-19.

New Mexicans who report symptoms of COVID-19 infection, such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath, should call their health care provider or the NMDOH COVID-19 hotline immediately (**1-855-600-3453**).

People without those symptoms do *not* need to be tested for COVID-19. This is allergy season, and allergy symptoms such as sneezing or itchy eyes, nose or throat do not indicate a need for testing. While the state is gratified that COVID-19 testing is increasingly available, we need to prioritize testing for persons with symptoms of COVID-19 infection – fever, cough, or shortness of breath.

The state Department of Health is updating its dedicated COVID-19 webpage, viewable here: **cv.nmhealth.org**.

New Mexicans who have non-health-related questions or concerns can also call **833-551-0518** or visit **newmexico.gov**, which is being updated and finalized as a one-stop source for information.

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CONTACT

The Office of Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham is located on the fourth floor of the New Mexico State Capitol in Room 400.

Address:
490 Old Santa Fe Trail Room 400
Santa Fe, NM 87501

Phone: (505) 476-2200
Toll free: (833) 520-0020

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