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 #9: Officials Continue Focus on Increasing PPE and Hospital Beds as Minnesota Reaches 10 Deaths

ST. PAUL — State officials continue the focus on locating more personal protective equipment and additional hospital beds as the number of lab-confirmed COVID-19 cases in Minnesota jumped to over 500 this past weekend.

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.

- The SEOC coordinated with several partners to make 78 deliveries of personal protective equipment (PPE) around the state on Sunday.
- The SEOC is focusing on PPE as well as locating additional hospital beds, including those for alternate care facilities.
    - An additional 5,000 hospital beds were located over the weekend.
    - 500 additional beds were located for alternate care facilities. The SEOC is in the process of locating 2,750 more beds for those facilities.
- Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM) regional coordinators are working with local health coalitions to identify potential alternative care facilities.
- The SEOC is coordinating with the Minnesota departments of Health and Corrections on locating PPE as well as creating and distributing updated guidance for jails and corrections officers.
- The SEOC is also coordinating with the departments of Health and Education to look at services for special needs children that usually take place in school.
- The SEOC continues to support the state hotline. Many of the questions coming in to the hotline are related to Gov. Walz's stay at home order. Staff from the departments of Education and Human Services are answering calls from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily at either 651-297-1304 or 800-657-3504.

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

Lab-confirmed cases up 73 from Sunday to Monday

Global/National Update

- Worldwide: 737,000 cases and 35,000 deaths.
- U.S.: 143,000 cases (NY: 60,679; NJ: 13,386; CA: 6,356; MI: 5,489; MA: 4,955) and over 2,500 deaths (776 in New York).

Minnesota Update

- Total of 576 lab-confirmed cases in Minnesota – up 73 cases from Sunday, March 29.
    - 10 reported deaths.
    - Since the start of the outbreak, 92 patients in Minnesota have been hospitalized.
    - 56 patients currently hospitalized with 24 in intensive care; the rest are recovering at home.

    - See the latest situation report on the Minnesota Department of Health's website.
- There were 644 calls to MDH public hotline on March 29. The public hotline is open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. The number is 651-201-3920.
- There were 553,000 visits to MDH COVID-19 website on March 29.

Unemployment insurance application process changes

To accommodate the large increase in applications, Unemployment Insurance (UI) has now switched to an application schedule based on the last digit of a person's Social Security number (SSN).

- To ensure the system can handle the increased activity, the Department of Employment and Economic Development is asking that new Unemployment Insurance applicants apply online on an assigned day, based on their SSN.
    - If the last digit of your SSN is 0, 1 or 2, you should apply on Monday.
    - If the last digit of your SSN is 3, 4 or 5, you should apply on Tuesday.
    - If the last digit of your SSN is 6,7, 8 or 9, you should apply on Wednesday.
    - You will only be allowed to apply on your assigned day or on Thursday or Friday if you missed your assigned day.
- The date of application will not affect the amount of benefits you will be paid.
- If you already have a UI account, you can still login anytime.

Speed leads to weekend traffic fatalities

- Even with reduced traffic, law enforcement continues to receive reports of aggressive driving and drivers speeding on Minnesota roads.
- Speed contributed to three of the five traffic deaths this past weekend in the state. Each year, speed contributes to an average of 92 deaths on our roads.

Gov. Walz signs law extending expiration dates of driver's licenses and ID cards

- Gov. Walz signed a bill into law March 28 that provides an extension for Minnesotans whose driver's licenses or ID cards expire during the peacetime emergency.
    - The law extends the expiration date for any valid driver's license, instruction permit, provisional license, operator's permit, limited license, and farm work license that would expire during the peacetime emergency. The expiration dates for these licenses will be extended for two months after the month the peacetime emergency ends.

Officials traveling across Minnesota to identify potential alternate care facilities

A joint operation featuring the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Minnesota Department of Health and the Minnesota National Guard will be traveling across the state by UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter this week to identify potential alternate care facilities. This will allow experts to see the facilities up close, and assess what upgrades will be required to expand available medical capacity if needed.

Adult day center facilities ordered to close

The Minnesota Department of Human Services notified Rule 223 Adult Day Center facilities on March 29 that they are to immediately close and cease providing adult day care services as required by Gov. Walz's Emergency Executive Order 20-20 directing Minnesotans to "stay at home." Many had already closed on their own.

DWI arrests dropping but one DWI is one too many

Fewer motorists are on the roads as people are taking Gov. Walz's stay at home order seriously. Still, there were 94 DWI arrests this past weekend compared with 293 arrests during the same weekend last year. While the social rules have changed due to COVID-19, the decline in impaired driving is a change that Minnesotans should permanently strive for when social activities return. Stay home if you have had a few too many drinks and always line up a sober ride if you need to travel to another location after drinking.

Red Cross in Minnesota: Blood donors are encouraged to keep appointments

- Thank you to the many Minnesotans, including members of the Minnesota National Guard, who have donated blood during the past couple weeks. Your efforts have helped the Red Cross provide lifesaving blood products for every day patients locally and nationally during this pandemic.
- During this uncertain time, we encourage individuals to keep scheduled blood donation appointments and to make new blood donation appointments for the weeks ahead to ensure a stable supply throughout this pandemic.
- A critical need continues for platelet donations due to their short, five-day shelf life. Platelets are tiny cells in your blood that form clots and stop bleeding. They are essential to surviving and fighting cancer, chronic diseases, and traumatic injuries.
- If you are healthy and feeling well, please make an appointment to donate mid-April and after by using the Red Cross Blood Donor App, visiting RedCrossBlood.org or calling 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767).

Agriculture inspections continue statewide

- The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is continuing inspection services during Gov. Walz's two-week stay at home order and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes inspections of dairy, meat, and food manufacturing facilities, retail food outlets, pesticide and fertilizer operations, and seed, grain, and nursery companies. MDA will continue to conduct in-person inspections; however, virtual or video-based inspections will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Requests for inspection modifications due to COVID-19 should be made to your inspector.
- With the passage of legislation last week, MDA will now exempt individuals from testing and other licensing requirements to allow them to apply general use antimicrobials for hire to disinfect buildings and control the spread of COVID-19. The exemption applies only to commercial application of general use pesticide products for the sanitizing or disinfecting treatment for COVID-19. The exemption DOES NOT include those who commercially apply pesticides in HVAC systems or cooling towers in industrial, commercial and institutional buildings, residence, and other buildings to prevent, destroy, repel, or mitigate indoor mold, bacteria, or other microbes beyond COVID-19.
- Questions can be directed to mdaresponds@state.mn.us.

Traffic volumes over the weekend decreased by more than 50 percent statewide

During the first weekend of the Stay at Home Executive Order, the Minnesota Department of Transportation saw even more significant decreases in traffic volumes.

- Saturday: Traffic volumes on March 28 were down 55 percent statewide compared to Saturday averages for March 2019.
- Sunday: Traffic volumes on March 29 were down 54 percent statewide compared to Sunday averages for March 2019.

Most MnDOT offices now closed to the public; services continue

MnDOT's Central Office in St. Paul and district headquarter buildings are now closed to the public, though MnDOT employees are still working remotely and continuing to provide services and assistance. Minnesotans are encouraged to contact MnDOT via phone or email; office locations and contact information can be found on the MnDOT website. Rest areas remain open statewide, with the exception of 10 seasonal rest areas that will remain closed indefinitely.

Minnesota National Guard to host blood drive

The Minnesota National Guard will host a Red Cross blood drive on April 3 at the Cedar Street Armory in St. Paul from 8am to 2 p.m. Please pre-register at RedCrossBlood.org and enter sponsor code: Guard. Find a blood drive on the Red Cross' website.

National Guard continues working with state partners

- The National Guard is expanding logistic support to the MDH medical warehouse to assist in the continuing distribution of critical supplies. This support will allow MDH staff to operate the facility 24 hours a day.
- Twelve soldiers and airmen are mobilized for state active duty, and 103 full-time staff are actively involved in preparing the Minnesota National Guard for any potential COVID-19 at the governor's direction.

Veterans reminded what to do if they have symptoms

Officials with the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs remind veterans with fever, cough and shortness of breath to call the VA Health Care System first if feeling ill..

- Minneapolis: 612-467-1100
- Fargo: 701-239-3700 extension 2319
- St. Cloud 320-252-1670 or 800-247-1739.
- Sioux Falls: 605-336-3230 or 605-336-5001

The medical staff will advise you on next steps based on your symptoms. In a medical emergency, call 911.

Beware of COVID-19 stimulus payment scams

- Congress approved the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) on March 27. This directs the IRS to issue COVID-19 stimulus payments to taxpayers; check the IRS Coronavirus Tax Relief page for updates. The Minnesota Department of Revenue does not have a role in issuing these federal payments.
- Be on the lookout for potential fraud. The department and IRS will never call, text, or email you to verify your banking information for any stimulus payment or refund.

Distance learning begins today

- The Distance Learning Period authorized and directed by Gov. Walz began today. Many school districts and charter schools around the state are now implementing the district learning plans they developed between March 18-27. Schools have been advised to post their distance learning plans on their websites.
- More information can be found on the MDE website.