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 #5: State Agency COVID-19 Response Actions

ST. PAUL — Staff from state agencies and volunteer organizations continue working to keep Minnesotans safe and coordinate efforts to provide essential services and information during the COVID-19 pandemic. The State Emergency Operations Center (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 expands state hotline, continues strengthening public-private partnerships

The SEOC continues to be fully activated and staff from all state agencies, along with volunteer organizations, are staffing the SEOC either physically or virtually.

- SEOC staff is facilitating plans to expand alternate health care facilities, if needed, with the Minnesota Department of Health and the Army Corps of Engineers.
- The SEOC completed an expansion of the state hotline to answer questions from Minnesotans.
    - The hotline is transferring callers to the State Attorney General's office or the Department of Human rights for complaints about price gouging or discrimination.
    - The hotline continues to field questions regarding business and school closures and child care. Staff from the departments of Education and Human Services are answering calls from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. at either 651-297-1304 or 800-657-3504.
- HSEM regional coordinators are in touch daily with emergency managers from all 87 Minnesota counties and well as tribes in the state.

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

Lab-confirmed COVID-19 cases up to 262 in Minnesota; 15 currently hospitalized

Global/National Update

- Worldwide: Nearly 393,000 cases and 17,200 deaths.
- U.S.: 46,481 (NY: 23,230; NJ: 2,844; CA: 2,220; NJ: 2,221) and 593 deaths.

Minnesota Update

- Total of 262 lab-confirmed cases in Minnesota – up 27 cases from March 23.
    - Since the start of the outbreak, 21 patients in Minnesota have been hospitalized.
    - 15 patients currently hospitalized; the rest are recovering at home.
- 1,897 calls to the MDH public hotline March 23. The public hotline is open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. The number is 651-201-3920.
- 797,211 visits to MDH COVID-19 website on March 23.

Blood drive cancellations continue to grow

- Through March 23, more than 238 Red Cross blood drives in our Minnesota and Dakotas region have been canceled, resulting in about 7,900 fewer blood donations in our region. Across the country, about 7,000 Red Cross blood drives have been canceled, resulting in more than 200,000 fewer blood donations.
- We appreciate the incredible generosity of donors who have answered our call for help, and we emphasize that it remains critically important to schedule a donation appointment even weeks out as we anticipate ongoing challenges during this public health crisis.
- Healthy individuals are encouraged to make an appointment to donate by using the Red Cross Blood Donor App, visiting RedCrossBlood.org or calling 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767).

Applications for Unemployment Insurance continue to climb

- The Department of Employment and Economic Development has received 149,443 Unemployment Insurance (UI) applications (from 6 a.m. March 16 to 8 p.m. March 23).
- Occupations of people filing new or reactivating UI applications:
    - Food preparation and services: 48,540
    - Personal care and service (salons, spas, tattoo parlors, etc.): 10,844
    - Sales and services: 10,657
    - Office and administrative support: 9,271
    - Healthcare practitioners and technicians: 8,934

Experiencing discrimination? Contact the Department of Human Rights

- Someone's race or ethnicity does not make them more likely to have COVID-19. Viruses don't discriminate and neither should we.
- If anyone has experienced discrimination in their job, housing, or in a public place, they should contact the Minnesota Department of Human Rights by calling 651-539-1133 or 1-800-657-3704 or report discrimination on the Department's website. Interpretation and translation services are available.

Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM) outlines ways Minnesotans can help

- When there's an emergency, it's only natural for people to want to step up and help where they can. There are five ways Minnesotans can help those in need during the COVID-19 pandemic. Find the list on the SEOC webpage.
    - The SEOC webpage is where HSEM posts daily updates about actions being taken on a state level as we work with federal and local partners to keep communities safe. It also includes resources, rumor control information and a list of ways Minnesotans can help during the outbreak.
    - The page will be updated response efforts continue in the coming weeks, so don't forget to share it with friends and family.

State Fire Marshal Division (SFMD) suspends health care inspections

- SFMD health care inspections done under the MDH and Center for Medicare/Medicaid Services (CMS) have been suspended.
    - Inspectors are not going into these types of facilities due to the risk of infections.
    - Staff are currently reviewing facility compliance plans.
    - Staff are continuing with on-site construction inspections.

Fire marshal Minnesota Board of Firefighter Training and Education continue reaching out to fire service

- SFMD fire service specialists continue reaching out to Minnesota fire departments to get a sense of their issues and what assistance they may need.
- Minnesota Board of Firefighter Training and Education (MBFTE) staff continue communicating with the fire service regarding reimbursements and grant opportunities, and how COVID-19 is affecting MBFTE funding.
- The MBFTE has been providing data to the Department of Public Safety and the governor's office regarding fire department staffing numbers and contact information.

State Patrol troopers taking precautions, asking motorists to continue safe driving habits

- The Minnesota State Patrol is operating at normal staffing levels and troopers continue keeping roads safe by enforcing all traffic laws.
- All troopers are carrying personal protective equipment and are highly trained on taking precautions.
- In the past week our troopers have received increased reports of aggressive driving and drivers speeding, some more than 100 mph.
    - "COVID-19 is not a license to speed, drive impaired, or make other poor decisions behind the wheel," said Col Matt Langer, chief of the Minnesota State Patrol. "We owe it to everyone who needs to be on the road right now to maintain order and provide for safe travel. Let's make sure hospital beds are available for those dealing with COVID-19. Preventing critical injuries from a crash can help make that happen."
- The State Patrol is reminding Minnesotans to pay attention, buckle up, obey the speed limit and drive sober.
- The State Patrol is encouraging Minnesotans to follow MDH advice and stay home when they can.

Traffic volume statewide still down compared with this time last year

The Minnesota Department of Transportation continues to monitor traffic volumes.

- Traffic volumes were down 26 percent statewide March 23 compared with Monday averages for March 2019.
- In the Twin Cities metro area: Traffic volumes on March 23 were down 33 percent from Monday averages for March 2019.
- Statewide: Traffic volumes for March 23 were down 18 percent from the most previous Monday (March 16, 2020).