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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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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SEOC Update #21: Tornado Drill Day Will Happen Thursday as State Continues COVID-19 Response; Sirens Will Sound in Many Counties

ST. PAUL — While state agencies and volunteer organizations continue focusing on Minnesota's COVID-19 response, emergency management officials are reminding people to take time this week to plan and prepare for severe weather.

"I know our collective attention is focused squarely on fighting the virus, but we live in Minnesota where the weather always has a vote and we need to listen to that," said Joe Kelly, director of the Department of Public Safety's Homeland Security and Emergency management division.

Thursday is Tornado Drill Day in Minnesota, a part of Severe Weather Awareness Week. Kelly urged Minnesotans to review and talk about their emergency plans.

"In this COVID-19 era, make sure you keep social distancing if you practice your sheltering plan on Tornado Drill Day," Kelly said.

Mock tornado drills are scheduled for 1:45 and 6:45 p.m. Thursday. Outdoor warning sirens will sound in several Minnesota counties for both mock drills. There will be no weather radio alerts and Emergency Alert System (EAS) messages will not appear on TV. This blog highlights best practices for maintaining social distance while sheltering.

The State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) remains fully activated following Gov. Tim Walz's declaration of a peacetime emergency on March 13 to respond to COVID-19. That peacetime emergency has been extended until May 13.

SEOC ready should other emergencies arise

- The SEOC has finalized plans for a secondary and tertiary emergency operations center should the need arise. SEOC officials want to ensure they are ready to respond to any natural disaster or emergency situation during the state response to COVID-19.
- The SEOC continues to support the state hotline. The hotline received 114 calls on April 14. The hotline operates from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily. State employees are staffing the hotline and are answering calls at either 651-297-1304 or 800-657-3504.

DEED announces 13-week extension of unemployment benefits

The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) announced today that the agency has fully implemented the Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC), which provides a 13-week extension of unemployment benefits for eligible applications.

- PEUC was authorized by Congress in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), which was signed into law on March 27, 2020.
- There are approximately 8,000 people have exhausted or will soon exhaust their unemployment insurance benefits.
- With PEUC fully implemented, those individuals will now be eligible for an additional 13 weeks of unemployment insurance in addition to the temporary additional federal $600 compensation payments implemented last week.
- Individuals who have exhausted their unemployment benefits and believe they are eligible for extended benefits under the PEUC should login to their online account at uimn.org for additional details.

New 'Coping with COVID-19' web page launched

- The Minnesota Department of Human Services added new content to its website today to provide resources for people struggling with coping with COVID-19.
- For many people, the pandemic is a stressful time filled with worry about our community, our loved ones and our own health. Resources are available to help people are struggling with anxiety, depression and other mental health issues, maybe for the first time, due to COVID-19 pandemic. Resources include:
    - Mental health crisis hotlines
    - Children's and adult mental health crisis contacts in Minnesota's 87 counties
    - Provider information

State officials see indications that long-term care facility infection control is making a difference

- Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) officials have talked a lot about the heightened concerns regarding residents and workers in long-term care facilities around the state, given that these facilities generally have a population of higher-risk people living in a congregate setting. That is why MDH has been working hard with those care providers to make sure facilities are implementing really strong infection control practices.
- MDH is seeing some early indications that this infection control emphasis is having a positive impact.
    - Of the 108 facilities in which COVID-19 cases have been confirmed, half (54) have only one case as of April 15. That suggests that infection control is helping limit the spread of those infections.

Red Cross in Minnesota: We're in this together

- Red Cross responders are dedicated to providing support like financial assistance and referring affected families to community resources in our COVID-19 pandemic environment. This work continues through phone calls and virtual support to families affected by home fires in Minnesota.
- Since March 1, Minnesota Red Cross volunteers have responded to 83 home fires helping more than 350 people, including large apartment fires in Inver Grove Heights and Mound. Working with partners, such as Open Door Pantry, we're supporting families even during this health crisis.
- Red Cross responders are monitoring flood conditions and connecting with emergency response partners in the Red River Valley in northwest Minnesota. We are ready to help provide disaster relief if there's a need.
- We are thankful to fully recovered COVID-19 patients for their willingness to donate plasma to treat patients who are seriously ill with COVID-19. Potential donors must complete the Convalescent Plasma COVID-19 Donor Request Form and be contacted by the Red Cross for scheduling. Program details and the donor request form are online.

Number of people in intensive care up 18 in one day

- 1,809 lab-confirmed cases in Minnesota — an increase of 114 cases since April 14.
- 87 reported deaths — an increase of eight deaths from April 14; additional deaths were all long-term care facility residents in their 70s, 80s or 90s.
- 197 patients are currently hospitalized with 93 in intensive care — an increase of 18 people since April 14; 940 patients released from isolation.
- Learn more about the latest lab-diagnosed cases on the COVID-19 public dashboard.

Dentists still able to see emergency cases

If you have a dental emergency like a bad toothache, call your dentist. Dentists can still see emergency cases. Emergency departments at hospitals are not set up to treat dental problems. Reducing visits to the ER ensures staff are available for life-threatening emergencies and can help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Health care response grant available

Health care organizations may be eligible for a COVID-19 Health Care Response grant, the MDH has announced.

- $150 million is available for eligible applicants, including ambulance services, health care clinics, pharmacies, health care facilities and long term care facilities, and health systems.
- There is no deadline for applying, but MDH anticipates many requests and recommend applying as soon as possible.
- There will likely not be enough funds to meet all requests, but MDH will work to fund as many requests as possible based on an evaluation of need and evolving statewide and regional priorities.
- MDH may choose to award funds in groups, based on evolving priorities and needs as the outbreak expands, rather than awarding all funds at once.
- The RFP and application are now available online.