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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Minnesota State Agencies Coordinate COVID-19 Response

State Emergency Operations Center Activated Following Gov. Walz Executive Order

ST. PAUL — The State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) was activated following Gov. Tim Walz's March 13 executive order issuing a Peacetime State of Emergency in response to the nationwide COVID-19 outbreak.

The SEOC facilitates coordination between agencies so the state can work to keep Minnesotans safe and provide essential services during emergencies. Coordination is currently taking place virtually and through daily conference calls with state agency partners.

The SEOC Hotline is also activated to answer questions regarding Gov. Walz's executive order to close schools statewide through March 27 and provide child care to emergency workers. 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.

The SEOC will provide daily updates on state activities related to COVID-19, and will also provide information on the SEOC website.

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

Minnesota Department of Health (MDH)

Global/National Update (as of 9 a.m., March 18, 2020)

- More than 203,500 cases and 8,200 deaths worldwide.
- U.S. reporting 6,496 confirmed cases and 114 deaths.

Minnesota Update (as of 9 a.m., March 18, 2020)

- Total of 77 confirmed cases in Minnesota – 17 confirmed March 17.
  - Age range of new cases is 21 to 71.
  - Four of the 77 total patients hospitalized; one in the ICU.
  - Total reflects only the results from the MDH testing program.
- MDH officials believe there are more cases in Minnesota and the virus is circulating in communities.
- It is important for everyone to follow advice on community mitigation and social distancing to help flatten the case curve.
- As of March 18, the MDH lab has tested 2,762 total patients since PHL testing started March 1.

Actions and Outreach

- More than 2,350 calls to MDH public hotline yesterday. The hotline is open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. The number is 651-201-3920.
- More than 851,000 daily visits to MDH's COVID-19 website.
- MDH continues to produce materials and videos in multiple languages. These materials are posted on the MDH website when available and more are coming soon.
- MDH developed radio public service announcements and other advertisements for media vendors that serve diverse communities, and these messages will be translated when needed.

American Red Cross Minnesota Region

The nation now faces a severe blood shortage due to an unprecedented number of blood drive cancellations in response to the coronavirus pandemic. Through March 17, nearly 4,000 Red Cross blood drives have been canceled across the country, resulting in more than 100,000 fewer blood donations.

- In the Minnesota and Dakotas region, 110 blood drives have been canceled, resulting in more than 3,569 fewer blood donations.
- Healthy and eligible individuals are needed now to donate to help patients counting on lifesaving blood. Donors centers remain open and added precautions are in place to ensure safety of donors and staff.
- Schedule donation appointments to give blood at redcross.org.

Minnesota Board of Animal Health

- The Minnesota Board of Animal Health continues to dispel rumors of pets being infected with COVID-19. The Board is issuing guidance to veterinarians and veterinary clinics in Minnesota to highlight that pets and other domestic animals are not considered to be at risk for either contracting or spreading COVID-19. The guidance also includes Department of Health recommendations for veterinary clinic staff and clients to practice social distancing and other proactive health measures like routine hand washing.
- The Board of Animal Health sent guidance to Minnesota's livestock markets to follow CDC recommendations on social distancing and limit attendance during livestock sales, which are commonly community gathering places in rural Minnesota.

Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA)

- The food supply is safe. Public health and food safety experts do not have any evidence to suggest that COVID-19 can be transmitted by food. There are no reports of COVID-19 being transmitted by food produced in the U.S. or imported from other countries.
- MDA dairy, meat, food, and feed inspectors continue to conduct inspections to ensure food safety standards are met and remain committed to keeping the food supply safe.
- There is no shortage of food in Minnesota. The Minnesota Grocers Association confirms that supplies are abundant.
- From farm to fork, Minnesota's food supply chain is complex. We are working actively to provide technical support and guidance to our regulated industries including grocery stores, convenience stores, dairies, meat processors, and food manufacturers. We have developed best practices for those firms that are adding food delivery and pick-up services for their customers.

Minnesota Department of Commerce

The Minnesota Department of Commerce is releasing two consumers alerts related to fraud during the COVID-19 outbreak

- Avoiding E-Mail, Telephone and Mail Scams due to increased connections while teleworking;
    - Due to an increase in social connections due to teleworking through email, phone and social media, Commerce warns consumers to be on alert for scammers.
    - It includes tips for questions that consumers should ask about calls, e-mails or mail they are receiving.
    - Additional information about who consumers can contact if they suspect they have been targeted or scammed.
- Avoiding Investment Fraud from scammers capitalizing on the volatility and uncertainty of the financial market.
    - Because of the downturn and volatility of the stock market and economy due to the COVID-19 outbreak, investors should be on the alert for con artists who may capitalize on people's fear.
    - Advice on the signs of possible investment fraud and advising consumers to contact their financial professional advisor or the Department of Commerce if they have questions about the investment professional they work with.

Minnesota Department of Corrections (DOC)

- Visiting has been canceled at all correctional facilities. All inmates are now permitted two free phone calls per week.
- All medical copays in the correctional facilities have been waived until further notice. The agency is committed to ensuring that individual economic concerns do not limit an inmate's willingness to seek medical care.
- DOC is actively recruiting and hiring correctional officers.
- New hand-washing stations have been sent to every correctional facility to be installed at the entrance. Additionally, additional hand-sanitizing stations have been sent for installation at strategic points within each facility.

Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED)

- Unemployment Insurance (UI) is receiving an unprecedented volume of applications: they received 37,682 applications cumulative for this week as of 8 p.m. on March 17. That's a total of more than 11,000 on Monday and more than 26,000 on Tuesday. It would be more typical this time of year to receive 500 new applications for benefits per day. To put it another way, typically UI would be receiving 40-50 new UI

applications per hour. On March 17, UI was receiving over 2,000 per hour. DEED continues to promote online application through earned and social media, as well as other online resources, to maximize efficiency of the UI application process.
- DEED is connecting with business leaders from around Minnesota to offer information, hear their questions and ensure we are doing all we can as quickly as we can to assist Minnesota businesses during this difficult time. We are working with our colleagues at the U.S. Small Business Administration now to get assistance flowing to businesses as soon as possible. We will continue to push new information and resources to businesses as it becomes available, through multiple channels, including via regular updates to the Information for Employers page on the COVID-19 page on the DEED website.

Minnesota Department of Human Rights

- The Minnesota Department of Human Rights is hearing from the Asian American community that it is experiencing backlash due to COVID-19.
- Any Minnesotan who is a victim of a hate crime because of fear around COVID-19 should contact the police. Anyone who has experienced discrimination in their job, housing, or in a public place due to COVID-19 should contact the Minnesota Department of Human Rights. The Minnesota Human Rights Act prohibits discrimination based on someone's race, ethnicity, or other protected classes.

Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS)

- The MinnesotaCare walk-in payment center within the Elmer L. Andersen Human Services Building is closing today to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- DHS has suspended visiting and outings for patients and clients in state-operated direct care facilities in St. Peter (Minnesota Security Hospital, Forensic Nursing Home, Minnesota Sex Offender Program, and the Community Addiction Recovery Enterprise).
- The DHS COVID-19 website includes information being sent to counties and tribes, and other partners such as child care providers.

Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (DLI)

- Minnesota worker protections related to COVID-19 regarding sick leave, family medical leave, discrimination, reporting health concerns at work, unemployment insurance and workers' compensation are on DLI's website.
- DLI will reach out to municipalities that enforce the state building code to remind them of their responsibilities to provide inspection services and to contact DLI if they will be reducing services.
- DLI will also reach out to construction industry associations to inform them who they can contact at DLI if contractors have difficulty obtaining inspections.
- All DLI construction codes license exams are suspended indefinitely.
- Continuing education deadlines have been extended 90 days for construction codes licenses that expire in March, April and May 2020. License renewals must still be submitted prior to the current expiration date. Late fees will apply to renewals submitted after the expiration date.

Minnesota Department of Public Safety

Emergency Communication Networks (ECN)

- Emergency Communication Networks (ECN) is in contact with the public safety partners we serve (911 dispatchers, law enforcement, fire and EMS) to ensure our services — such as 911, land mobile radio, public alert and warning notifications and wireless broadband — remain operational during this time.
- ECN has recommended that public safety answering points (PSAPs), also known as 911 dispatch centers, begin implementing a special line of questioning to identify and notify responders of patients who have COVID-19 symptoms. This includes the following questions: Does the patient have a fever, trouble breathing, or a cough? Has the patient been in contact with anyone who has a respiratory illness?

Alcohol and Gambling Enforcement Division (AGED)

- Establishments must have an off-sale license to sell alcohol that is allowed off the premises. No waiver will be issued at this time for those with only an on-sale license to allow for off-sales.
- Our licensing staff remains available and will continue to process new liquor licenses and renewals.
- All on-site inspections that are currently scheduled will take place. As more information becomes available about COVID-19, the inspection schedule could change.

State Fire Marshal Division (SFMD)

The State Fire Marshal Division (SFMD) is working closely with various fire service associations and groups to provide best practices guidance for fire departments and fire

departments that provide emergency medical services.

- The SFMD is in regular communication with the Minnesota State Fire Chiefs Association (MSFCA) and the Minnesota State Fire Department Association and we have passed along important messages to the fire service on behalf of both of those associations.
- Fire service officials can visit the MSFCA COVID-19 Taskforce website for more information.

Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA)

The three Minnesota State Veterans Cemeteries in Duluth, Little Falls and Preston remain open for both visitors and interments. We are strongly urging that all visitors and committal services adhere to MDH guidelines for community mitigation. Options for families:

- Hold a direct burial or interment now and postpone committal or memorial services to a later date.
- Postpone or reschedule both burial or interment and services to a later date.
- Limit the number of attendees to less than 50 for outdoor services.
- At Little Falls, move services from inside the Committal Building to outside (a tent is available), using social distancing.
- Explore live streaming the service on social media to allow some people to attend virtually.
- Be aware that volunteer and military honor guard availability may be limited.

Minnesota Office of Higher Education

- Commissioner Dennis Olson has requested public and private higher education institutions consider the following:
    - What medical equipment, including ventilators or other respiratory assistance equipment, may be available for use by Minnesota hospitals in case of an emergency shortage.
    - Are there current faculty and staff with licenses in various medical professions, as well as Early Childhood teaching, who may be available to be redeployed, if needed?
- The University of Minnesota, Minnesota State College and Universities and the Minnesota Private College Council have all responded that they will look into this and report back.