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

Bruce Gordon, Director of Communications

CONTACT:
Bruce Gordon 651-201-7171
bruce.gordon@state.mn.us

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 07, 2020

SEOC Update #15: Officials Warn Minnesotans Not to Ease Up on Social Distancing as Religious Holidays, Warmer Weather Arrive

ST. PAUL — While Minnesota appears to have a lower COVID-19 infection rate compared with other states, officials are asking residents to continue being vigilant with social distancing. Health officials acknowledge navigating upcoming holidays and continuing to stay apart from family and friends is difficult, but warn that abandoning social distancing could have severe consequences.

“The social distancing and other mitigations are having a positive impact. We need to keep this up,” said Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) Commissioner Jan Malcolm. “We encourage all Minnesotans to keep up this good and difficult work even during the religious holidays coming up.

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.

SEOC working with FEMA on personal protective equipment (PPE) requests

The SEOC remains fully activated and staffed either physically or virtually by all state agencies and several volunteer organizations.

- SEOC staff are coordinating with MDH, the Minnesota National Guard and Army Corps of Engineers to identify alternative care sites around the state, should they be needed. These locations would be for non-critical care.
    - To date, 29 site visits have been conducted, with eight more scheduled today and tomorrow. More than 3,200 bed-sites have been identified. This is in addition to beds in Minnesota hospitals, which have worked to expand their capacity.
    - The alternative care sites will be prioritized based on need and location. From that list, one or two sites will be selected and prepared for use.
- SEOC officials are working with FEMA to find ways to best distribute anticipated PPE. Gown and gloves are becoming a priority for PPE requests. The SEOC is reaching out to counties to determine the most critical needs for PPE.
- Officials in the SEOC continue to also respond to flooding in the state. Marshall County is requesting assistance with levee patrol and traffic control as the city is experiencing flooding
- The SEOC continues to support the state hotline. The hotline received 182 calls on Monday. State employees are staffing the hotline and 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:

Minnesota tops 1,000 lab-confirmed COVID-19 cases, 64 people in the ICU

Minnesota Update

- Total of 1,069 lab-confirmed cases in Minnesota — up 83 cases from April 6.
    - 34 reported deaths — up four from April 6. Four additional deaths all were residents of long-term care facilities.
        - Dakota County resident in their 60s
        - Winona County resident in their 90s
        - Hennepin County resident in their 90s
        - Hennepin County resident in their 80s

    - Since the start of the outbreak, 242 patients in Minnesota have been hospitalized.
    - 120 patients currently hospitalized with 64 in the ICU; the rest are recovering at home.
- See the latest situation report on the Minnesota Department of Health's website.
- There were 296 calls to MDH public hotline on April 6. The public hotline is open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. The number is 651-201-3920.
- There were 701,151 visits to MDH COVID-19 website on April 6.

Global/National Update

- Worldwide: Nearly 1.4 million cases and more than 76,000 deaths as of this morning.
- U.S.: 369,069 cases (NY: 131,083; NJ: 41,090; MI: 17,221; CA: 16,363; LA: 14,867) and 10,993 deaths (3,485 in New York City).

Driver Education Programs Can Provide Driver Education via Teleconference

The Minnesota Department of Public Safety Driver and Vehicle Services division (DPS-DVS) approved a variance allowing Minnesota driver education programs to provide driver education via teleconference or other methods of video distant learning in a live setting to their students.

- Driver education programs are not required to participate, and students should contact their driver education program to find out if this is an option.
- The variance allows driver education programs to offer teleconferencing in place of classroom training to students currently enrolled or planning to enroll with the driver education program while Gov. Walz's executive stay at home order is in effect.
- Once the order is lifted, driver education programs must immediately resume classroom-setting training and may no longer offer teleconferencing in place of classroom training.

Unemployment Insurance applications received, accounts reactivated tops 355,000

- Total cumulative new Unemployment Insurance (UI) applications received and accounts reactivated from March 16 through April 6: 355,108
- New UI applications received and accounts reactivated as of end of day on Monday, April 6: 13,424
- The Minnesota Unemployment Insurance Program has successfully processed initial weekly payment requests for more than 90 percent of new or reactivated applicants since March 16 who have been determined eligible and who have requested payment.
- Executive Order 20-29 announced by the Governor on April 6 will help thousands more Minnesotans receive their unemployment benefits more quickly.

Minnesota 911 dispatch centers receive 11 percent fewer calls

According to statistics provided by CenturyLink to the Department of Public Safety division of Emergency Communication Networks (DPS-ECN), call volumes for Minnesota public safety answering points (PSAPS), also known as 911 dispatch centers, continued their decline in the fourth week of March compared with the same time period last year.

- In 2019, Minnesota PSAPs received 51,796 calls for the fourth week of March.
- In 2020, Minnesota PSAPs answered 46,133 calls for the fourth week of March.

That 11 percent decrease is greater than the decrease in calls for the third week of March, which was eight percent.

Discussions about emergency childcare facilities taking place with state fire marshal and DHS

State Fire Marshal Division (SFMD) staff met virtually with Department of Human Services to discuss options for emergency childcare facilities. The SFMD is focused on the need for fire safety in these turbulent times as well as working with care providers across the state to inspect and assist with fire code compliance.

Fire marshal meets with Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to discuss gas station safety

State Fire Marshal Jim Smith and SFMD fire code staff met with partners at Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to discuss fire safety at unattended gas stations. Some gas stations

will be closing the retail side of operations and solely offering pay at the pump. Staff met to address environmental and fire hazard concerns. Gas stations need to be checked daily to ensure safety equipment is in place and well-marked. Signed emergency stops must also be available outside of the gas station. Some stations with 24-hour retail had historically placed the emergency stops inside the store. With a few modifications, those stops could be moved outdoors.

Completing the 2020 Census Amid COVID-19 Disruptions

Why counting every college student matters: The Census guides funding levels for over $15 billion in annual federal spending in Minnesota. For each person not counted, Minnesota risks losing nearly $28,000 in federal funding over the next 10 years. The Census also determines the number of congressional seats each state receives, and Minnesota is at risk of losing a congressional seat.

How to make sure you are counted: The Census asks for information based on where you live on April 1. Students that normally live at school should be counted at school — even if you are temporarily living somewhere else due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The address that applies when completing the 2020 Census is the address where you would have lived on April 1st if COVID-19 had not caused you to temporarily relocate. For more information, watch this video from the Census explaining these details.

- **If you normally live in a dorm or similar college-owned housing**, your institution will work with the Census Bureau to make sure you are counted. If you are temporarily living elsewhere, tell the people you are living with that they should not include you when responding to the Census.
- **If you normally live in a rental unit or other location**, either alone or with roommates, follow these instructions:
    1. You should have received or will soon receive an invitation via U.S. mail to respond to the Census with a 12-digit code. The Census Bureau began mailing these invitations on March 12th. If you are not at the same location currently or have not received an invitation you can still complete the Census online with a few additional steps to verify your address.
    2. Designate one person from your rental unit or household to complete the Census and fill it out here. If you cannot coordinate with the other people in your rental unit or household, you can each fill it out individually.
    3. You can refer to this sample Census form to understand the information the Census requests from each person.
- **If you normally live with a parent or guardian while you are at school**, that person should include you on their Census form.

More information about the Minnesota Census is available online.

Red Cross in Minnesota: Thankful for blood and platelets donors and staff, volunteers

- We greatly appreciate the outstanding support of blood and platelets donors as well as the dedication of Red Cross blood collection, lab, and medical office staff and volunteers in Minnesota.
- Through your generosity, we're preventing a blood shortage in our region and across the country during this uncertain and challenging time.
- As of April 5, some 14,000 Red Cross blood drives have been canceled across the country due to coronavirus concerns, resulting in more than 400,000 fewer blood donations, including in our region about 550 cancellations and more than 17,500 fewer donations.
- We encourage individuals to keep scheduled blood donation appointments and to make new blood donation appointments at RedCrossBlood.org for the weeks ahead to ensure a stable supply throughout this pandemic.

Traffic volumes remain significantly below 2019 levels

The Minnesota Department of Transportation continues to monitor traffic volumes statewide.

- **Statewide**: Traffic volumes on April 6 were down 50 percent compared to Monday averages for April 2019.
- **Metro area**: Traffic volumes on April 6 were down 47 percent compared to Monday averages for April 2019.