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
March 19, 2020

SEOC UPDATE #2: State Agency COVID-19 Response Actions

ST. PAUL — The State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) continues to be fully activated to support all state agencies with their COVID-19 response following Gov. Tim Walz's March 13 executive order issuing a Peacetime State of Emergency in response to the nationwide pandemic.

SEOC Activity

Representatives from all state agencies are staffing the SEOC either physically or virtually.

- The SEOC is monitoring the health of all employees on site.
- State officials are continuing to strengthen public-private partnerships and enhancing communications with business partners.
- 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. daily at either 651-297-1304 or 800-657-3504. The SEOC continues to support the public hotline and will increase its capabilities as needed.
- The logistics section secured personal protective equipment for health care workers and arranged for delivery across the state by the Minnesota State Patrol.
- 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

- More than 222,642 cases and 9,115 deaths globally.
- U.S. reporting 9,415 confirmed cases (NY: 3,083 WA: 1,187 CA: 870, NJ: 427)
- U.S. reporting 150 deaths (WA: 68 NY: 20)

Minnesota Update

- Total of 89 confirmed cases in Minnesota – 12 confirmed March 18.
- Since the start of the outbreak, seven COVID-19 patients in Minnesota have been hospitalized.
    - Four patients currently hospitalized.
    - Most patients are recovering at home.
    - Age range of cases: 17 years to 94 years; median age of 49.
    - This total of 89 reflects only the results from the MDH testing program. We believe there are more cases in Minnesota, and that the virus is circulating in communities. It is important for everyone to follow advice on community mitigation and social distancing to help us flatten the case curve.
- 405 tested March 18
    - MDH has tested more than 3,100 total patients since PHL testing started March 1.

Outreach and Actions

- 1,947 calls to MDH public hotline on March 18. The hotline is open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. The number is 651-201-3920.
- More than 718,000 visits to the MDH COVID-19 website.
- New CDC online tool that can help people determine whether to stay home given symptoms, etc. Find it at https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html.

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 18, nearly 4,500 Red Cross blood drives have been canceled across the country, resulting in more than 150,000 fewer blood donations.

- In the Minnesota and Dakotas region, 117 blood drives have been canceled, resulting in more than 3,800 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 Department of Administration

- The Office of Grants Administration notified state grant administrators of flexibility that can be provided to help grant recipients adjust to changing conditions. Agencies can provide recipients late reporting options so payments will not be delayed, amend or revise grant agreements to reflect altered work plans and budgets, and develop alternative strategies for meeting grant outcomes.
- The Data Practices Office has issued guidance to public entities regarding Open Meeting Law and Minnesota Government Data Practices Act during a declared state of emergency. Guidance can be accessed at: https://mn.gov/admin/data-practices/
- The State Demographer has shifted in-person Census-related events to digital and phone outreach as well as encouraging partner organizations to do the same. Also issued guidance to college students who have been displaced as a result of the virus: Count yourself in the place you normally live and sleep—the dorm, off-campus housing, etc.— even if are you not currently there because of the virus. Students who have returned unexpectedly from abroad should count themselves where they normally live and sleep if they were not abroad.

Minnesota Department of Commerce

The Minnesota Department of Commerce is releasing a consumers alert related business interruption insurance.

- The alert addresses questions about what business interruption insurance covers and doesn't cover.
    - It specifically addresses whether it covers situations like the COVID-19 epidemic and whether the governor declaring a state of emergency would impact what it covers;
    - It instructs business owners of which agencies they can contact with questions.

Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED)

Updated Unemployment Insurance (UI) numbers from DEED:

- New UI applications received and previous applications reactivated so far this week (as of 8 p.m. March 18): 72,245
    - On March 18, DEED received 31,572 new (UI) applications.
    - It would be more typical this time of year to receive 500 new UI applications for benefits per day.
- We continue to remind affected workers to please apply online at uimn.org to ensure the most efficient application process.

Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS)

- DHS-operated special needs dental clinics in Brainerd, Fergus Falls, Cambridge, Faribault and Willmar are closed until further notice to avoid spreading the COVID-19 virus. The move follows recommendation from the Minnesota Board of Dentistry, and consistent with ADA guidelines, that clinics postpone all non-emergency and elective dental care to protect patients, dental care providers and the community. All appointments for routine services such as checkups, cleanings and fillings have been canceled and will be rescheduled. The clinics are still providing emergency services.
- The Southern Cities Psychiatric Clinic in Faribault has suspended in-clinic visits.
- DHS held a conference call March 18 with more than 150 county human services directors, tribal health and human services directors, Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators (MACSSA) staff and others. The department shared information about state efforts to increase flexibility for human services and federal legislation related to nutrition assistance and Medicaid coverage. Much of the call was devoted to providing updates on COVID-19 response efforts in DHS program areas. DHS encouraged tribes and counties to continue communicating about what is happening on the ground.

Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (DLI)

- DLI is providing guidance to municipalities about continuing inspection services and help to contractors who are having trouble getting inspections

www.dli.mn.gov/inspections.
- View COVID-19 related resources, information from Minnesota OSHA Compliance at http://www.dli.mn.gov/business/workplace-safety-and-health/mnosha-compliance-novel-coronavirus-covid-19.
- All other agency updates related to COVID-19 are at http://www.dli.mn.gov/updates.

Minnesota Department of Military Affairs/Minnesota National Guard (MNNG)

- The MNNG delivered personal protective equipment, housed at Camp Ripley, to each of eight EMS regions (Bemidji, Duluth, Alexandria, Saint Cloud, Eagle Lake, Rochester, Saint Paul and Dawson) in Minnesota for use by first responders.
- The MNNG distributed an additional 7,000 masks to the State Patrol for delivery to seven MDH offices (Bemidji, Duluth, Fergus Falls, St. Cloud, Marshall, Mankato, Rochester). This personal protective equipment (PPE) will provide protection to nursing home inspection teams across the state.
- The MNNG Joint Operations Center is running extended hour operations in support of COVID-19 supporting planning efforts and preparing for approve response requests.

Minnesota Department of Public Safety

Driver and Vehicle Services

- All road tests are cancelled March 18-27, due to COVID-19 concerns. Anyone who has a class D, commercial driver's license (CDL) or motorcycle road test appointment scheduled during this time will receive a cancellation notice by email or text message. Other driver services, such as knowledge testing and driver's license applications, continue to be available. More information is in a recent news release.
- DVS services are unavailable at many deputy registrar and driver's license agent offices, because offices have closed in response to COVID-19 virus concerns. Deputy registrar and driver's license agent offices are independently owned and operated. A full list of closures is on the DVS office locations page.
- Minnesotans have the option to renew their standard passenger class (cars, pick-ups under one ton and SUVs) vehicle registration online at drive.mn.gov.
- At this time no action has been taken regarding expired or expiring driver's license. DPS-DVS will continue to review this issue and release additional information or guidance if anything changes.
- REAL ID is a federal requirement and, at this time, the U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security (DHS) has not extended the Oct 1, 2020, deadline to comply with the law. The National Governor's Association and others have requested an extension, but DHS has yet to make an announcement. We'll provide additional information or guidance if anything changes at the federal level.

Office of Pipeline Safety (MNOPS)

- MNOPS is continuing to ensure Minnesota pipeline companies are in compliance with safety regulations.
    - To the extent possible, MNOPS will use tools like Skype to maintain regular communications with pipeline companies and underground utility operators.

State Patrol

- The State Patrol assisted MDH in delivering medical masks to be used by public health investigators.
    - Troopers delivered 1,000 masks to seven MDH locations in Bemidji, Duluth, Fergus Falls, St. Cloud, Marshall, Mankato and Rochester.
    - The quick delivery will help keep health care professionals and patients safe.

Minnesota Department of Revenue

- The Minnesota Department of Revenue is granting a 30-day Sales and Use Tax grace period for businesses identified in Executive Order 20-04. During this time the department will not assess penalties or interest.
- Identified businesses with a monthly Sales and Use Tax payment due March 20, 2020, will have until April 20 to make that payment. These customers should still file their return by March 20. At this time, this grace period for penalty and interest is only for monthly filers and only for the March 20 payment. Identified businesses can request additional relief from penalty and interest for reasonable cause after April 20.

Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT)

- MnDOT continues to reassure the public that critical services, such as snow plowing and road maintenance, will continue.
- At this time, rest areas remain open and MnDOT will make every effort to keep them open. Rest areas are critical for commercial freight movements during the pandemic. Rest area workers are provided with personal protective equipment and they have been trained on how to safely disinfect rest areas and to protect themselves against viruses, and have been instructed to maintain social distancing practices.
- Freeway Incident Response Safety Team (FIRST) trucks remain on the roads, but incidents have dropped with less motorists on the roads.

- MnDOT has postponed all public meetings and project open houses until at least April 15.