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NEWS RELEASE

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SEOC Update #17: State Officials Continue Focusing on Preparing Hospitals for Predicted Surge of COVID-19 Patients

ST. PAUL — Increasing surge capacity at Minnesota hospitals, accumulating more personal protective equipment (PPE) and establishing alternate care sites remain the top priorities for officials working in the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC).

Homeland Security and Emergency Management Director Joe Kelly said Gov. Tim Walz's decision to extend the state's stay at home order until May 4 will help buy officials time to ensure hospitals are prepared to save as many lives as possible as COVID-19 cases peak.

"We are making the best use of this time that Minnesotans are paying for the hard way," Kelly said.

The SEOC is fully activated to support all state agencies with their COVID-19 response following Gov. Walz's March 13 executive order issuing a Peacetime State of Emergency in response to the nationwide pandemic.

SEOC looking at options for homeless, others with COVID-19

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

- FEMA is reviewing an SEOC plan for non-congregate care. Planning includes how to best care for those experiencing homelessness who need to be isolated after testing positive for COVID-19. Additionally, the plan considers how people who may live in close quarters, such as an apartment, can self-isolate.
- State officials in the SEOC continue to work to deliver PPE to areas across the state. Deliveries are being made by state employees as well as UPS.
- PPE needs continue with a focus on gloves, gowns, masks and face shields.
- The SEOC continues to support the state hotline. The hotline received 154 calls on April 8. 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:

Deaths go from 39 to 50 — largest single-day increase in one day since outbreak began

Minnesota Update

- 1,242 lab-confirmed cases in Minnesota — up 88 cases from April 8.
  - 50 reported deaths — up 11 from April 8; additional deaths represent the largest single-day increase in Minnesota since the outbreak began.
  - 10 of the 11 additional deaths were long-term care facility (LTCF) residents.
  - 293 patients in Minnesota have been hospitalized since the start of the outbreak.
  - 145 patients are currently hospitalized with 63 in the ICU; the rest are recovering at home.
- See the latest situation report on the Minnesota Department of Health's website.

Global/National Update

- Worldwide: Just over 1.5 million cases and nearly 90,000 deaths.
- U.S.: 432,579 cases (NY: 151,079; NJ: 47,437; MI: 20,346; CA: 19,063; LA: 17,030) and nearly 15,000 deaths (4,571 in New York City).

Department of Veterans Affairs accepting grant applications from Minnesota veterans

The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA) has received more than 1,100 applications since April 6 for grants available to Minnesota veterans impacted by COVID-19. MDVA is accepting applications from Minnesota veterans who have been financially

impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. MDVA is awarding one-time COVID-19 Disaster Relief Grants in the amount of $1,000 and COVID-19 Special Needs Grants of up to $3,000.

Eligible applicants must be:

1. A veteran or the surviving spouse of a deceased veteran as defined by MN Statute 197.447.
2. A Minnesota resident.
3. Negatively financial impacted by COVID-19.

For more information or to apply, visit MinnesotaVeteran.org/COVIDRelief.

I-35W bridge part of Thursday night's #LightItBlue salute to health care providers, essential workers

The Interstate 35W bridge in Minneapolis will glow light blue tonight to honor health care providers and essential workers. Other landmarks and buildings in Minnesota, and in states across the country, will also be lit blue to show support and gratitude to workers helping during the COVID-19 pandemic. The lightings are part of a worldwide campaign called #LightItBlue. The I-35W bridge is equipped with a computerized lighting system that allows the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) to color the bridge with light in almost any color. It is often lit in various colors for significant regional, national and international events.

School districts, charter schools reporting nearly 1.4 million meals served

- The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) has asked districts and charter schools to self-report the daily number of meals they are serving to the school communities and the number of students receiving school-age care.
- The final count the first week of distance learning from about 337 school districts and charter schools:
    - 1,392,615 meals served
    - 6,223 average school-age students cared for each day
- More information can be found on the MDE website.

Exam stations, driver's license agent offices closed; more than 100 deputy registrars providing limited vehicle services

All Driver and Vehicle Services (DVS) exam stations and driver's license agent offices are closed until May 4 to follow Gov. Walz's executive order for Minnesotans to stay home and slow the spread of COVID-19. More than 100 deputy registrar offices are open providing limited motor vehicle services. No face-to-face transactions or driver services are available. Road tests and vehicle inspections are unavailable while DVS exam stations are closed. Minnesotans whose driver's licenses or ID cards expire during the peacetime emergency will have two months after the month the peacetime emergency ends to renew. DVS staff continue to work remotely during this time, processing previously-submitted applications and answering public questions. More information is available on the DVS website.

Department of Agriculture issues guidelines for garden centers

In Gov. Walz's executive order announcement Wednesday, he included Minnesota garden centers as exempt from the stay at home order. Garden centers will be able to open and operate as long as they comply with Minnesota Department of Agriculture guidelines.

Traffic volumes remain significantly below 2019 levels

MnDOT continues to monitor traffic volumes statewide.

- **Metro area**: Traffic volumes on April 8 were down 40 percent compared to Wednesday averages for April 2019.
- **Statewide**: Traffic volumes on April 8 were down 35 percent compared to Wednesday averages for April 2019.

Minnesota bolsters health care programs in pandemic

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Minnesotans who rely on Medical Assistance and MinnesotaCare should know that their health care coverage is secure and that they have improved access to telemedicine and extended supplies of many prescription drugs. Under emergency authority DHS is waiving and modifying procedures during the COVID-19 peacetime emergency. Changes include:

- Restoring coverage for people whose enrollment was due to expire at end of March.

- Postponing renewals, which could have led to gaps in coverage over paperwork issues.
- Suspending case closures unless a person requests one, moves out of state, or passes away.
- Expanding access to telemedicine for health care and home and community-based waiver programs.
- Allowing people to get up to a 90-day supply of prescriptions for maintenance medications, but not controlled substances.
- Eliminating co-payments and other cost-sharing for COVID-19 testing and treatment.

Many Minnesotans who need health care coverage can apply for Medical Assistance and MinnesotaCare at any time through MNsure or by calling 855-366-7873. More information about eligibility for Medical Assistance and MinnesotaCare is on the DHS public website. More information about these changes is in a news release from DHS.

Minnesotans working on spring yard projects reminded to call 811 before digging

Planting a tree? Putting in a new mailbox? Building a deck? The Minnesota Office of Pipeline Safety is reminding Minnesotans to call 811 at least two business days before they dig. The Gopher State One-Call center is still operational as an essential business. Minnesotans can also submit a ticket online.

State fire marshal: Doing some spring cleaning? Clean those dryer vents

State Fire Marshal Jim Smith is reminding Minnesotans doing spring cleaning while staying at home to pay attention to their dryer vents and lint traps. Lint buildup could cause serious problems, including a house fire. It's important to go beyond cleaning the removable screen in the dryer. Lint can collect under the dryer and inside the exhaust tubing that travels from the dryer to the home's exterior of your home. Learn more about how to properly clean out lint traps and dryer vents in this video.

Red Cross: Donors meeting needs, Safety measures added

- Through the generosity of donors across the country and in Minnesota, the Red Cross is meeting the immediate needs patients. Blood and platelet donations are being collected by appointment only at donation centers and sponsored drives.
- In accordance with revised CDC guidelines, starting April 15 blood donors will be required to wear a face mask or face covering while donating blood or platelets. If donors do not have one, then the Red Cross will provide one.
- This is the time to take care of one another. If you are healthy and feeling well, please make an appointment to donate in the weeks ahead by using the Red Cross Blood Donor App, visiting RedCrossBlood.org or calling 800-RED CROSS (800-733-2767).
- Volunteers continue helping people affected by home fires across our state. This includes the recent multi-unit apartment fire displacing approximately 50 people in Dakota County. Red Cross responders provided the assistance through remote responses.