



COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

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CARLOS J. PALACIOS, COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

PRESS RELEASE

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LOCAL HEALTH EMERGENCY DECLARED FOR COVID-19 RESPONSE

Finding that there is an imminent threat to public health and welfare from novel coronavirus (COVID-19), Santa Cruz County Health Officer Dr. Gail Newel has issued a Declaration of Local Health Emergency.

County Administrative Office Carlos Palacios will also formally ask the Board of Supervisors to declare a local emergency over COVID-19. The Board of Supervisors will be asked to ratify the declarations at its March 10, 2020 meeting.

"In a short period of time, coronavirus has been found throughout the Bay Area, including several of our neighboring counties. We have been coordinating our preparation efforts for COVID-19, and the time has come to elevate our preparedness efforts to the next step," Palacios said.

While the risk to the public remains low, the number of reported worldwide cases of COVID-19 has escalated dramatically over a short period of time. To date, there are more than 90,000 confirmed cases more than 3,000 deaths. Though concentrated in China, cases have been reported on every continent except Antarctica. Symptoms include fever, cough and respiratory difficulties.

To date, there have been eight documented deaths attributable to COVID-19 in the United States. Community spread is occurring, including in Santa Clara County where approximately one-quarter of the local workforce travels daily. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and World Health Organization have declared public health emergencies, along with several California counties.

To help coordinate local response to future COVID-19 cases within Santa Cruz County, the County's Emergency Operations Center has been activated to support the Health Services Agency's Departmental Operations Center, which has primary responsibility for managing the community response under the direction of Dr. Newel.

In addition to helping manage community resources in response to COVID-19, the declarations also allow the County to access funding to support efforts to fight the outbreak.

Testing for coronavirus is being coordinated by the California Department of Public Health in coordination with the Centers for Disease Control. Testing capacity remains limited with no local tests for coronavirus, and residents are asked to refrain from asking local providers for tests unless directed by a medical professional. If you have health concerns, please contact your primary care physician or call 211 for help locating a clinic near you.