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Delaware County Holds March 8 Update to Brief Residents on COVID-19

Delaware County Council, joined by members of Delaware County's Department of Intercommunity Health and Delaware County's Emergency Services held a press conference on March 8 to provide an update on Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19.)

On the evening of March 8, the Pennsylvania Department of Health announced two presumptive positive cases of 2019 Novel Coronavirus in Montgomery County. That brings the total number of cases in Pennsylvania to four, one of which is in Delaware County. All four patients are in stable condition at their homes and have mild symptoms. None of the four cases are community spread. All four patients had recently traveled to an area where COVID-19 is present.

"This afternoon we are happy to report that there are no new cases in Delaware County," said Delaware County Council Chairman Brian Zidek. "This briefing is to update residents on what has taken place over the past 24 hours and share plans that we have in place moving forward. Since receiving the information on Friday, we have been working around the clock to ensure we are doing everything we can on our end to protect our residents and prevent the spread of the virus."

Yesterday the County's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) at the 911 Center was activated. This ensures that the County can support our municipalities, first responders and health care systems. The County's Department of Emergency Services has been in communication with Montgomery County and we have the ability to share resources if needed.

This morning Council held a conference call with all County directors to update them and discuss a Continuity of Government Plan should a larger outbreak occur. County Directors will be meeting with Emergency Management this week to be trained on software to communicate with employees in the event that employees aren't able to go into work or the Courthouse and Government Center are closed. Emergency Management is creating a shared document system for Directors to share resources with employees in addition to the mass communication that is being sent out. Council has been in contact with the County's President Judge to ensure the courts remain operational.

This morning Council spoke to officials from the Pennsylvania Department of Health and PEMA. Yesterday we reported that the Pennsylvania Department of Health has community nurses in Delaware County and they are talking to residents who may have been in contact with the person who is presumed positive. They have conducted aggressive contact tracing to identify the people this individual may have come into contact with and are alerting those people. The contact tracing is complete and anyone who was identified to be at risk has been tested and quarantined if necessary. Community nurses remain in Delaware County.

On March 9, the County will be meeting with school superintendents across the county to address concerns and discuss policies and guidance. At this time the Pennsylvania Health Department and CDC are not advising schools to close. The decision to close a school would be made by the individual school district. The County has shared resources with superintendents on prevention and guidance from the state and CDC. Most schools are performing extra cleaning this weekend to ensure schools are as germ free as possible. The County has also been in touch with universities in the County.

The County will be meeting with Managers of municipalities on March 9 to provide an update and address any questions.

The County has been in contact with the Secretary of the Department of Corrections and we are following the procedures and guidance that they have set forth for the County's prison.

The County has limited visitors to Fair Acres, the County's nursing home. Non-essential visitors will not be permitted into the building. Visitors who require entry will need to contact management and be screened before entering. All new admissions must be screened by the Medical Director prior to admission. Only essential deliveries or vendors will be allowed into the building. Fair Acres is advising that residents stay on campus. Fair Acres employees who have traveled are asked to contact the Medical Management Department prior to returning to work. Fair Acres management is stressing to all employees and residents the need to properly wash hands with soap and water and/or use an alcohol hand sanitizer to prevent the spread of germs. The decisions were made to ensure that Fair Acres residents, who are often more vulnerable, are protected as much as possible.

Delaware County is reminding residents that currently the best way to protect yourself is to take the same precautions you would to prevent the flu or common cold:

- Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze with your elbow to avoid touching your face
- Wash your hands often with soap and warm/hot water for at least 20 seconds
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available
- Clean surfaces frequently, including countertops, light switches, cell phones, remotes, and other frequently touched items
- If you are feeling sick, stay home. Rest, take care of yourself and don't spread the germs.

If you have symptoms of COVID-19, you are asked to call the Pennsylvania Department of Health at 1-877-PA-HEALTH.

The County has created a website dedicated to information on the Coronavirus, including prevention, resources and a FAQ section with link to the Pennsylvania Department of Health and CDC. The website can be found here: www.delcopa.gov/ich/resources/coronavirus.html

Residents are encouraged to register for the DelcoAlert notification system which alerts residents of updates and emergencies. The website to register can be found here: www.delcopa.gov/delcoalert/delcoalert.html