2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Information for Businesses

The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) is closely monitoring a rapidly emerging outbreak of a novel coronavirus (COVID-19) first identified in the city of Wuhan, China. Cases have been confirmed in several other countries, including the U.S. **At this time, no cases have been identified in South Carolina.**

We understand that South Carolina residents may have concerns about how the 2019 Novel Coronavirus may impact South Carolinians. Our ongoing goal remains prevention. This is a rapidly evolving situation, and the CDC webpage on COVID-19 for businesses maintains the most up-to-date guidance for businesses.

About the COVID-19 Outbreak
- COVID-19 is a respiratory illness caused by a newly identified coronavirus that was not known to cause human illness prior to the current outbreak.
- The COVID-19 outbreak began in Wuhan, China, in December of 2019. Cases have now been reported in multiple other countries including the U.S. Most cases outside of China have been associated with travelers from China, but there have been cases of person-to-person transmission, including in the U.S.
- 14 days is currently believed to be the longest time between when a person may have been exposed to the novel coronavirus and when symptoms may begin (the incubation period).
- This is a rapidly evolving situation requiring a frequently changing response.
- The latest updates from DHEC are available at **scdhec.gov/covid19**.
- For the most current information from the Centers of Disease Control (CDC), please visit the **CDC's 2019 Novel Coronavirus webpage**.

Prevention
We understand that residents may have concerns about how the virus may impact South Carolinians. Our ongoing goal remains prevention. The best way to prevent infection is to avoid exposure to the virus. DHEC and the CDC currently recommend avoiding all nonessential travel to China and South Korea, and CDC has issued other recommendations regarding travel to certain countries due to COVID-19.

No additional precautions are recommended for the public at this time, beyond the simple daily precautions that everyone should always take steps to stop the spread of illness, including:
- getting the flu vaccine,
- washing your hands,
- covering your cough, and
- appropriately disposing tissues and other items contaminated with respiratory droplets.

Federal Approach to Travelers from China (effective Monday, Feb.3, 2020 at noon)

- All incoming flights to the U.S. from China are being routed through **eleven airports** for entry health screening: Atlanta, Chicago's O'Hare, Dallas, Detroit, Honolulu, Los Angeles, Newark, New York's JFK, San Francisco, Seattle, and Washington's Dulles.
- U.S. citizens returning to the U.S. who were in **Hubei Province** in the previous 14 days are subject to **mandatory quarantine** for up to 14 days after arrival in the U.S.
  - These individuals are being quarantined at appropriate quarantine centers established by the federal government.
- U.S. citizens returning to the U.S. who were in any other part of **mainland China** (not Hong Kong or Macau) in the previous 14 days undergo entry health screening and are subject to up to 14 days of **monitored self-quarantine**.
  - These individuals are permitted to complete their travel back home once they pass the health entry screening, then they are asked to self-quarantine at their homes with monitoring by state and local health departments (DHEC).
- With few exceptions, **foreign nationals who were in any part of mainland China** (not Hong Kong or Macau) in the previous 14 days are **not permitted entry** into the U.S.
  - Exceptions include lawful permanent residents of the U.S., aliens who are family members of U.S. citizens or permanent residents and meet specific criteria, and aliens who fall into several other less common categories detailed **here.**

DHEC's Current Recommendations for Travelers from Other Affected Areas

- Travelers returning from affected areas other than China should have an increased awareness of the situation and **monitor themselves for symptoms of illness for 14 days after leaving the affected area** and **take appropriate actions if symptoms develop.**
  - Travelers should monitor themselves for fever* (measured temperature greater than or equal to 100.5°F) and respiratory symptoms such as cough and shortness of breath. (*****Note: Fever might not be present in some individuals, such as those who are very young, elderly, immunosuppressed, or taking certain fever-lowering medications.)
  - If a person who has traveled from an area affected by COVID-19 within the past 14 days develops fever and respiratory symptoms, they should immediately self-isolate (separate themselves from others) and contact by phone a healthcare provider or facility for assessment.
  - It is important that a person who has developed symptoms within 14 days of returning from an affected area notify the healthcare provider or facility about their symptoms and recent travel *before* showing up at the healthcare facility, so that appropriate precautions can be taken to prevent them from exposing other persons.

No Risk from Packages or Products Shipped from China

- There is no evidence to suggest that products imported from China pose a risk for spreading COVID-19 in the U.S.
- Coronaviruses can only live on objects outside of the body for a short time, between 2 to 12 hours, making it unlikely that the virus could survive transport from China to the U.S.

How CDC and DHEC are working together

- CDC has been proactively preparing for the introduction of COVID-19 in the U.S. for weeks, including alerting clinicians about how to detect, report and diagnose COVID-19 and prevent spread and providing guidance for travelers.
- As the state's lead public health agency, DHEC is taking proactive steps to be prepared for potential cases in South Carolina, including remaining updated on and following the latest CDC recommendations related to surveillance, evaluation, and response.

CDC Outbreak Response Activities

- CDC is mounting an aggressive public health response strategy to identify potential cases early, assure they receive appropriate care and prevent additional spread when possible.
- CDC has issued Health Alerts, including guidance on key matters such as how to identify individuals who should be considered persons under investigation (PUI) for COVID-19 infection and reporting to state/local health departments. DHEC also shared the CDC's alerts with those in South Carolina enrolled in the Health Alert Network.
- CDC has developed guidance outlining appropriate precautions for healthcare workers caring for ill patients in health care settings and homes of people with COVID-19 who do not require hospitalization.

DHEC Response Activities

- Continues to monitor CDC developments and guidance daily.
- Developed tools for the investigation of suspected and confirmed COVID-19 cases and provided training to epidemiology staff across the state to investigate and report cases.
- Communicated information to hospital laboratories, infection preventionists, and physicians to keep them informed about how to identify and report possible cases to DHEC.
- Developed a webpage to provide information and other resources about COVID-19 for the public.
- Held briefings and meetings for state government officials, the Public Health Emergency Plan Committee, hospital executives at the South Carolina Hospital Association, the S.C. Board of Health and Environmental Control, and reporters on COVID-19 preparations and activities in South Carolina.