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FIRST PRESumptive positive case of covid-19 confirmed in Louisiana

NEW ORLEANS — Mayor LaToya Cantrell today released the following statement in response to the confirmation of Louisiana’s first presumptive positive case of COVID-19, commonly referred to as coronavirus. The patient is confirmed to be a Jefferson Parish resident who is hospitalized in Orleans Parish. There is only one known case of the illness in the State at this time.

“We prepared for this moment, and we are ready,” said Mayor LaToya Cantrell. “Our public safety team and our public health leaders are working in close collaboration with the Louisiana Department of Health and with the Governor’s office. At this time, we believe the risk to the public remains low — but we are being vigilant and deliberate at every stage.”

The Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) is leading the State’s efforts to respond to COVID-19. Locally, NOHD is in constant communication with healthcare providers to communicate the most up-to-date guidance from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and LDH.

NEXT STEPS

Louisiana will send the presumptive positive test to the CDC for final confirmation of COVID-19. Because of the reliability of the test, Louisiana will move forward as if the test is an actual positive and take actions to contain the illness and assess the risk of spread. The Office of Public Health’s epidemiology team will begin an investigation of people who have come in close contact with the patient, including health care workers, to determine the risk of spread.
OPH will administer additional COVID-19 tests to determine if more people have been infected. Some people at risk may be quarantined for 14 days, even if their initial test is not positive.

LOUISIANA’S RESPONSE

Public health officials have been in close contact with the CDC and health providers since January, as the COVID-19 outbreak grew in China. Gov. Edwards established Louisiana’s COVID-19 Task Force to lead Louisiana’s planning for different scenarios relating to the spread of coronavirus. It will offer guidance not only to the Governor and the Unified Command Group, but also to state agencies, local governments, businesses and organizations.

Members of the COVID-19 Task Force include the Louisiana Department of Health and the Office of Public Health, the Governor’s Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness, the Division of Administration, the Department of Education, the Louisiana National Guard, the Department of Children and Family Services, the Louisiana Department of Justice, the United States Coast Guard, 211, Louisiana State Police and other agencies as deemed appropriate.

As an initial step, the COVID-19 Task Force is recommending that all state agencies review and update their Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP) that were developed statewide in 2012 under GOHSEP direction to take coronavirus into account.

ADVICE FOR THE PUBLIC

State officials encourage Louisianans to take the following proactive steps to protect the health of themselves and those around them:

- Cover your cough.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and water, or with a hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Disinfect frequently touched surfaces.
- Avoiding close contact (within six feet) with those who are sick.
Symptoms can include fever, cough and shortness of breath or difficulty breathing. CDC believes at this time that symptoms of COVID-19 may appear in as few as two days or as long as 14 days after exposure.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- For updates locally, please visit ready.nola.gov or call 311
- For updates on the State’s response to the coronavirus situation, visit LDH.louisiana.gov/Coronavirus.
- Members of the public with questions about coronavirus may call the coronavirus general information line at 1-855-523-2652 from 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

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