



CITY COUNCIL  
**Staff Report**

**Meeting Date:** March 10, 2020

**To:** Mayor and City Council

**From:** Scott Chadwick, City Manager

**Staff Contact:** Michael Calderwood, Chief, Carlsbad Fire Department  
michael.calderwood@carlsbadca.gov, 760-931-2141  
David Harrison, Assistant Director of Emergency Services  
david.harrison@carlsbadca.gov, 760-931-2137

**Subject:** Update on city preparations for public health emergencies such as the COVID-19 outbreak

**Recommended Action**

Receive an informational presentation on the city's preparations for responding to a possible public health emergency in consideration of the current outbreak of the virus that causes COVID-19 disease

**Executive Summary**

The City of Carlsbad maintains a high level of preparedness for potential threats to public health and safety. When first alerted to the COVID-19 outbreak in late 2019, the city's emergency services director coordinated with city departments to review preparedness plans. City staff have also kept in close contact with the San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency and its chief medical officer, who have the lead responsibility for directing responses to public health emergencies in the region. This report provides an overview of the measures the City of Carlsbad has made and will continue to make to prepare for a potential public health emergency.

**Discussion**

**Background**

A new coronavirus, first detected in China, causes a disease called COVID-19<sup>1</sup> that has now been found in numerous countries, including the United States. It is a respiratory disease with symptoms similar to the seasonal flu, including a fever, cough and shortness of breath. Transmission and prevention methods are also similar to the flu. There is currently no vaccine for the virus. On Jan. 30, 2020, a committee of the World Health Organization declared the outbreak a "public health emergency of international concern." Similar declarations have since been made by U.S. public health officials, San Diego County and the state of California. Such declarations are made to free up resources for a potential crisis.

---

<sup>1</sup> The virus has been named "SARS-CoV-2" while the disease it causes has been named "coronavirus disease 2019," abbreviated as COVID-19.

Public health experts such as the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention acknowledge that the COVID-19 outbreak is an emerging and rapidly evolving situation. Reported illnesses have ranged from mild to severe, including illness resulting in death. While information so far suggests that most COVID-19 illness is mild, a report out of China suggests serious illness occurs in 16% of cases. Older people and people with underlying health conditions such as heart disease, lung disease and diabetes seem to be at greater risk of serious illness.

According to the CDC, while the number of new COVID-19 cases appear to be leveling off in China, the virus' spread in other countries has been increasing since late February.

The CDC has reported what is known as the community spread of the virus that causes COVID-19 in Northern California, in Solano and in Santa Clara counties, and in Oregon and Washington. Community spread means people have been infected and medical authorities do not know how or where they became exposed. It is a key signal that the virus has spread beyond efforts to contain it.

### **Current risk assessment**

According to the CDC:

- For most of the American public, who are unlikely to be exposed to this virus at this time, the immediate health risk from COVID-19 is considered low.
- People in communities where ongoing community spread with the virus that causes COVID-19 has been reported are at elevated, though still relatively low risk of exposure.
- Healthcare workers caring for patients with COVID-19 are at elevated risk of exposure.
- Close contacts of persons with COVID-19 also are at elevated risk of exposure.
- Travelers returning from affected international locations where community spread is occurring also are at elevated risk of exposure.

The coronavirus that causes COVID-19 has not yet spread in the region. The County of San Diego Department of Health and Human Services is actively coordinating with federal and state health officials and monitoring potential cases in San Diego County.

### **City preparations**

For the past six weeks, the city's Emergency Management Administrative Team, under the leadership of the Fire Department, has been actively preparing the city for the possible spread of the COVID-19 virus into the local community, or community spread.

This preparation work has included:

- Maintaining constant awareness of the global, national and local status of the outbreak. While the situations in other locales may not impact Carlsbad, they provide useful information on what could happen here.
- Engaging with other public safety agencies in the region and across the state to try to ensure a coordinated multi-agency response. This has included discussions with other fire departments in San Diego County on how those agencies could create plans that



would help them provide a seamless response to a public health emergency across the region.

- Reaching out to appropriate organizations and groups in the city to raise their awareness about prevention and get them thinking about their own preparations and possible responses. This outreach extends to local school districts, business groups, residential care for the elderly providers and service organizations.
- Making sure the city has an adequate inventory of the face masks city firefighters and other emergency crews will need to wear as a precaution when interacting with patients infected with the coronavirus. (These masks are particularly important because healthcare workers caring for patients with COVID-19, including Carlsbad's firefighter/paramedics, are at elevated risk of exposure.)
- Working with the Communications Department to provide city staff and the public with helpful information about the personal hygiene steps one can take to help prevent the spread of the virus. Those tips are posted in city restrooms and on the page on the city website that provides information on the coronavirus outbreak.
- Requiring all city departments to update their lists of personnel who would be essential in an emergency, and make updates to the city's Continuity of Operations Plan, as required

#### **Possible city response measures**

A public health emergency such as the community spread of COVID-19 could have significant impacts on the city, reducing staffing and hindering normal operations and services while placing additional demands on city police and other departments and, particularly, city firefighters, who provide paramedic service in the city.

In the event the appropriate county medical authorities identify community spread in our region, the city manager may need to activate the Policy Group detailed in the city's Emergency Operations Plan.

Because staff, community members and visitors commute and travel across Southern California, it is possible that travel in an area of community spread in another county or region might lead to the decision to activate the Policy Group.

The Policy Group is the crisis management team that evaluates an emergency and considers the high-level policy issues that arise as the situation unfolds. This group of city leaders is responsible for making decisions on strategic legal, financial, human resource and inter-jurisdictional mutual aid issues. It's also charged with managing the challenges created by an emergency to maintain the continuity of city operations

In a public health emergency, the members of the Policy Group may need to consider:

- Activating the Emergency Operations Center to focus and maximize the city's response
- Cancelling public activities and events
- Closing or decontaminating city facilities
- Requiring that staff use telecommuting, virtual meetings and other techniques to avoid social settings where the virus could spread
- Activating the Continuity of Operations Plan
- Other issues that are unique to a public health emergency

Because staff, community members and visitors commute and travel across Southern California, a declaration that the coronavirus that causes COVID-19 has reached the community spread level in another county in the region could also trigger the activation of the Policy Group.

#### **Next Steps**

Staff will continue to monitor the COVID-19 situation, following the lead of San Diego County's public health officials, while working to coordinate infection response plans with other public safety agencies in the region.

Staff will also continue to provide information to all city departments and appropriate local agencies and organizations on how to help prevent and respond to the possible spread of the virus in our community.

As noted above, the city's Policy Group could be activated if the virus has been found to have spread into our city or if there is reasonable chance of spread in Carlsbad from other communities in the region.

#### **Fiscal Analysis**

There is no fiscal impact on this item.

#### **Environmental Evaluation (CEQA)**

Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21065, the efforts described in this report do not constitute a "project" within the meaning of California Environmental Quality Act in that it has no potential to cause either a direct or indirect physical change in the environment, or a reasonable foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment and, therefore, does not require environmental review.

#### **Public Notification and Outreach**

This item was noticed in accordance with the Ralph M. Brown Act and was available for public viewing and review at least 72 hours prior to the scheduled meeting date.

#### **Exhibit**

1. City Officials Monitoring Coronavirus (from city website)



# News Updates

## Officials Monitoring Coronavirus



City of Carlsbad public safety officials continue to monitor the spread of the coronavirus, coordinating closely with public health experts at the County of San Diego. At this time, residents are urged to stay informed and follow the same prevention steps that are recommended for the spread of the seasonal flu.

### **Simple health tips**

Wash your hands often throughout the day with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.

Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

Stay home when you are sick.

Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.

Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

### **Monitoring, ready to respond**

The County of San Diego's Health and Human Services Agency is working with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to monitor and respond to suspected cases in the San Diego region.

Carlsbad officials are participating in regular briefings with public health officials and have taken initial steps to ensure the city is prepared:

Ensured all plans and protocols for public health emergencies are up to date and shared with city staff, who serve as disaster service workers during an emergency.

A team of city staff representing a cross section of city departments meets monthly to review preparedness plans and is ready to be activated for emergency coordination needs. The team was briefed on seasonal flu and coronavirus spread, and protocols in January and February.

City first responders have received briefings on the coronavirus and are trained to handle patients who may have contagious diseases.

The city has procured additional supplies and gear to have on hand if needed for a coronavirus response.

### **Symptoms and what to do**

Patients infected with the coronavirus have reported:

fever

cough

shortness of breath/difficulty breathing

People should contact their health care provider with any specific concerns.

**Travel concerns**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention maintains a [webpage](#) that includes information and advice about coronavirus for travelers, including areas where travel advisories are in effect.

**What if ...**

While there are currently NO confirmed cases of COVID-19 in San Diego County, the potential for “community spread” – cases where the source of infection has not been identified – is significant. For this reason, all county residents are encouraged to practice hand hygiene and guard against the spread of any respiratory illness. Should community spread occur in San Diego, County Public Health and other agencies will post instructions.

**Additional information**

Call 2-1-1

San Diego County Health and Human Services [frequently asked questions](#)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [frequently asked questions](#)

[Prevention and treatment](#)

County Health and Human Services [coronavirus webpage](#)

February 28, 2020