March 9, 2020

County of Santa Clara Public Health Department Announces First Death from COVID-19 in Santa Clara County

*Individuals and organizations can help slow the spread of the virus by following guidance and recommendations from the Public Health Department*

**Santa Clara County, CA** - The County of Santa Clara Public Health Department is announcing the first death from COVID-19 in the county. The person who passed away was an adult woman in her 60s, had been hospitalized for several weeks, and was the third case of COVID-19 reported by the County Public Health Department on February 28, 2020. She was the first person in the County confirmed to be infected with COVID-19 without any known history of international travel or contact with a traveler or infected person, suggesting she contracted COVID-19 in our community. The patient died at El Camino Hospital on the morning of March 9, 2020. The Public Health Department expresses its sincere condolences to her family and friends.

“This is a tragic development. The Public Health Department is taking necessary, carefully considered steps to slow down the spread of the disease and to protect those at greatest risk,” said Dr. Sara Cody, Health Officer for Santa Clara County. “We are facing a historic public health challenge and know this is a very difficult time. Our top priority continues to be protecting the health of our community.”

It is critical that individuals and organizations take action to slow the spread of the virus following all applicable guidance and recommendations from the Public Health Department, and carefully reviewing new recommendations and direction as it is issued.

The County of Santa Clara Public Health Department continues to work closely with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the State of California Department of Public Health, and other partners as the new coronavirus situation continues to change.

Additional information and the Public Health Department’s and CDC’s guidance and recommendations is available will be updated as soon as possible on our website: http://sccphd.org/coronavirus.

March 6, 2020

County of Santa Clara Public Health Department Reports Four New Cases of COVID-19
The County of Santa Clara Public Health Department confirms four new cases of COVID-19 in Santa Clara County. This brings the total number of cases to 24.

- The 21st case is an adult male household contact of a previously confirmed case in Santa Clara County. He is under home isolation.
- The 22nd case is an adult female, who is hospitalized. This case is under investigation.
- The 23rd case is an adult male, who has recently traveled from India. He is hospitalized.
- The 24th case is an adult male, who is isolated at home. This case is under investigation.

These four cases are not related to each other. Due to medical privacy requirements and to protect their identity, further information about these cases will not be released.

An increase in cases is not unexpected. The Public Health Department will continue to identify anyone who has come into contact with these cases. The department will also be conducting community surveillance to determine the extent of possible disease spread in our community.

The County of Santa Clara Public Health Department is working closely with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the California Public Health Department and other partners to protect and inform the public. Updated information on our website: http://sccphd.org/coronavirus

No media availability today. Follow our Twitter for updates: @HealthySCC

March 5, 2020

New Guidance from the County of Santa Clara’s Public Health Department to Protect Residents of the County from Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Six New Confirmed Cases in Santa Clara County

SANTA CLARA COUNTY, CA — The County’s Public Health Department is taking proactive steps to protect the health of our community by making additional recommendations to slow the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in our community and reduce the number of people infected.

Today, the Public Health Department is announcing six new confirmed cases of COVID-19. There are now 20 total people who have tested positive for the virus in Santa Clara County. We are also announcing new guidance designed to reduce the spread of the virus in our community.
“We understand that people are very concerned about COVID-19. I want to remind the public that the vast majority of people who become infected with COVID-19 do not become seriously ill, and fully recover. We are making these recommendations to protect the most vulnerable members of our community from the virus, and slow its spread,” said Dr. Sara Cody, County Public Health Officer. “We are continuously monitoring this evolving situation, and will issue new guidance if and when that is warranted.”

The County of Santa Clara’s Public Health Department is taking proactive steps to protect the health of our community by making recommendations that are meant to slow the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in our community and reduce the number of people infected, and especially protect those who are most vulnerable to severe illness. These recommendations are effective immediately and may be updated upon further evaluation and public health need.

We understand these recommendations will have a tremendous impact on the lives of people in our community. Public Health is making these recommendations in consultation with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), based on the best information we have at this time, to protect the public’s health. This is a critical moment in the growing outbreak of COVID-19 in Santa Clara County when such measures can potentially slow the spread of the disease.

The following guidance was created after significant deliberation. Health officials weighed the potential benefits to our community’s health along with the significant disruptive effect that these recommendations could have. In consultation with the CDC, we developed these recommendations based on the rising number of cases in our County and the importance of taking these actions now to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

New Guidance for workplaces and businesses
Employers should take steps to make it more feasible for their employees to work in ways that minimize close contact with large numbers of people.

Employers should:

- Suspend nonessential employee travel.
- Minimize the number of employees working within arm’s length of one another, including minimizing or canceling large in-person meetings and conferences.
- Urge employees to stay home when they are sick and maximize flexibility in sick leave benefits.
- Not require a doctor’s note for employees that are sick as healthcare offices may be very busy and unable to provide that documentation right away.
- Consider use of telecommuting options for appropriate employees.
- Consider staggering start and end times to reduce large numbers of people coming together at the same time.
New Guidance for Persons Hosting Mass Gatherings and Large Community Events

At this time, we recommend postponing or canceling mass gatherings and large community events where large numbers of people are within arm’s length of one another.

If you can’t avoid bringing groups of people together:

- Urge anyone who is sick to not attend.
- Encourage those who are at higher risk for serious illness to not attend.
- Try to find ways to give people more physical space so that they aren’t in close contact as much as possible.
- Encourage attendees to follow increased hygiene, such as:
  - Washing their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
    - If soap and water are not available, alcohol-based hand sanitizer can be used in a pinch
  - Avoid close contact with other people
  - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
  - Covering their cough or sneeze with a tissue - if available - or into their elbow
- Clean surfaces with standard cleaners.

Guidance for people at higher risk for severe COVID-19 Illness

The County Public Health Department is recommending that persons at higher risk of severe illness should stay home and away from crowded social gatherings of people as much as possible such as parades, conferences, sporting events, and concerts where large numbers of people are within arm’s length of one another.

Those at higher risk include:

- People over 50 years of age. The risk increases significantly thereafter and escalates with age, with persons over age 80 in the highest risk category.
- People, regardless of age, with underlying health conditions including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, heart disease, or chronic lung diseases like COPD, as well as those with severely weakened immune systems.

Guidance for Schools

The County Public Health Department is not recommending closing schools at this time. If a staff member or student in a specific school confirmed to have COVID-19, the Public Health Department will consider, based on the specific facts and circumstances of that case, whether closure of that school is warranted. The reason we are not recommending school closures at this time is because children have not been shown to be a high-risk group for serious illness from this virus. As much as possible, children should be allowed to carry on with their education and normal activities.
We encourage all school officials to carefully review and follow the CDC’s guidance for K-12 schools and childcare centers, as well as our recommendations for mass gatherings and large events. We are aware that schools in our community may need to make decisions about postponement or cancelation of specific activities.

Some children have underlying health conditions, such as weakened immune systems, that put them at higher risk. Caregivers of children with underlying health conditions should consult with healthcare providers about whether their children should stay home.

**Guidance for people who are sick**

Stay home when you are sick. Do not go out in public when you are sick. Avoid medical settings in general unless necessary. If you are ill in any way call your doctor’s office first before going in and let them know your symptoms.

**Guidance for the general public**

- Even if you are not ill, avoid visiting hospitals, long term care facilities, or nursing homes to the extent possible. If you do need to visit one of these facilities, limit your time there and keep 6 feet away from patients and employees of the facility.
- **Do not go to the emergency room unless essential.** Emergency rooms need to be able to serve those with the most critical needs. If you have symptoms like cough, fever, or other respiratory problems, contact your regular doctor first.
- Stay home when sick and away from others in your household.
- Practice excellent personal hygiene habits, including washing your hands with soap and water frequently, coughing into a tissue or your elbow, and avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Stay away from people who are ill, especially if you are at higher risk for serious illness.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces and objects (like doorknobs and light switches). Regular household cleaners are effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth unless you’ve just washed your hands.
- Get plenty of rest, drink plenty of fluids, eat healthy foods, and manage your stress to keep your immunity strong.
- Follow CDC’s recommendations for using a facemask.
  - CDC does **not** recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19.
  - Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. The use of facemasks is also crucial for health workers and people who are taking care of someone in close settings (at home or in a healthcare facility).
- Stay informed. Information is changing frequently. Check and subscribe to Public Health’s website and social media pages:
  
  Public Health Website: [http://sccphd.org/coronavirus](http://sccphd.org/coronavirus)
Public Health Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/sccpublichealth/
Public Health Instagram: @scc_publichealth
Public Health Twitter: @HealthySCC