San Bernardino County orders cancellation of all gatherings; Third case confirmed

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SAN BERNARDINO, Calif. — Public health officials confirmed the 3rd case of coronavirus in San Bernardino County and are ordering the cancellation of gatherings of any number, officials said.

County officials did not provide any information on the patient or the location of where the person may have been tested.

On March 15th county health officials confirmed the first case involving a 53-year-old female who traveled to the U.K. On March 16th the second case of coronavirus in the county was confirmed. Officials said a 54-year-old male with underlying health conditions had contact with peoplers who recently traveled from Washington state. The following statement on the third confirmed case was released Tuesday afternoon:

In an effort to protect the public from further spread of the virus that causes COVID-19, the County's Acting Health Officer today ordered the cancellation of gatherings of any number of people within the county starting tomorrow through at least April 6.

The order also requires, starting tomorrow, the closing of all movie theatres, gyms, health clubs, bars, adult entertainment establishments, and other businesses that serve alcohol but do not serve food.

Food and beverage establishments must follow guidance issued by the California Department of Public Health on Monday (www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/OPA/Pages/NR20-024.aspx).

The order does not apply to activities "essential to the functioning of our state" including work, public transportation, airport travel, grocery stores, charitable food distribution, certified farmers' markets, and shopping at stores or malls. The order also does not apply to congregate living situations, including dormitories and homeless encampments. All San Bernardino County public schools have voluntarily closed as part of the effort to stop the spread of the virus, according to the County Superintendent of Schools.

"I understand this creates hardships for many families and businesses. But at the end of the day I believe we all understand that we are in this together, and that together, we will get through this," said Board of Supervisors Chairman Curt Hagman, who announced the order today in a video, which can be seen here. "The county is taking every step we can to stay in front of this threat."

"The health risk from COVID-19 to the general public in San Bernardino County remains low at this time, but everyone is strongly urged to engage in practices that reduce the risk of spread," said Acting County Health Officer Dr. Erin Gustafson.

The order also strongly cautions that persons aged 65 years and older and person of any age with certain underlying health conditions are at increased risk should they contract COVID-19, and encourages them to self-quarantine.

The order came amid confirmation today of the third reported case of novel coronavirus infection within San Bernardino County, a woman in her 50s. The county has no fatalities attributable to novel coronavirus.

On March 10, the County Public Health Officer and the Board of Supervisors declared a local health emergency to help ensure county government and the public are prepared for the possibility that COVID-19 will appear within the county.

Various appropriate County departments and agencies have been working together since Jan. 25 to prepare for the possible arrival of the virus within the county. The County Department of Public Health activated its Department Operations Center on Feb. 13.

County Public Health continues to work with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the California Department of Public Health to respond to reports of COVID-19.

As with any virus, especially during the cold and flu season, there are a number of steps you can take to protect your health and those around you:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Wash hands with soap and warm water for 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose or mouth, especially with unwashed hands.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using regular household cleaning spray or wipes.
- If someone does become sick with respiratory symptoms like fever and cough, they should stay away from work, school or other people to avoid spreading illness and seek assistance from their healthcare provider if symptoms become severe.
- N95 masks are not recommended outside a healthcare setting. Surgical masks can be worn by sick individuals to reduce the likelihood of spreading germs to others.

For information about the coronavirus crisis, visit the County's coronavirus website at wp.sbcounty.gov/dph/coronavirus, contact the coronavirus public information line from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday at 909-387-3911, or email coronavirus@dph.sbcounty.gov. The public information line is not equipped to handle medical questions or requests for medical care. Medical questions or requests for medical care should be made to medical care providers only.

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(source: San Bernardino County Health news release)