



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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Hawai'i Department of Health Prepares for 2019 novel coronavirus

HONOLULU – Although the risk to the general public is low, the Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH) is working with state, county, and federal partners including the medical community and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to actively prepare for possible cases of the 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV). Last week, the DOH alerted the medical community and information for healthcare providers has been posted at www.health.hawaii.gov.

Currently, there are no cases of 2019-nCoV identified in Hawai'i and the risk to the general public is low. The novel coronavirus originated in Wuhan, China and currently there are more than 6,000 cases confirmed in China and at least 17 countries. This includes 132 deaths in China. There have been at least 5 cases in the U.S. of people who traveled to Wuhan or other areas in China and no evidence of person to person spread of the virus in the U.S.

“The Hawai'i Department of Health is working closely with our emergency response network to put proactive measures in place to protect our residents and visitors,” said Health Director Bruce Anderson. “Because Hawai'i is a major travel destination, planning and preparing for possible outbreaks is an ongoing activity. The emergence of the 2019 coronavirus in Wuhan and its potential to spread to areas outside of China poses an increased threat to travelers and Hawai'i residents and we've ramped up our efforts.”

“We are advising people not to travel to China at this time,” said Anderson. “Various areas in China have been placed under quarantine by the Chinese government, and travel within the country is either completely prohibited or significantly curtailed to prevent the spread of this disease.”

To date, the DOH has taken the following actions:

- Issued a Medical Advisory on Jan. 21, 2020 to ensure healthcare providers are aware of the situation, understand response urgency to report potential cases to DOH immediately, conduct specimen collection and infection control measures;
- Continually updating DOH website to provide information as it evolves: <https://health.hawaii.gov/docd/advisories/novel-coronavirus-2019/>
- Monitoring our respiratory disease surveillance system to ensure Hawai'i is prepared should a person potentially exposed or infected with 2019-nCoV be identified;
- Collaborating and frequently communicating with CDC, other state health departments, and state public health partners (e.g., EMS/first responders, airport personnel, infection control partners) to closely monitor the situation nationally and internationally;
- Working with healthcare facilities to ensure hospitals and healthcare providers are up to date on infection control recommendations and patient assessment in the event they encounter a person potentially infected with 2019-nCoV; and
- Communicating regularly with travel partners, public and private, to ensure the latest CDC guidance and information is being shared with all relevant personnel.

Yesterday, the CDC reported that active airport screening of all incoming passengers from Wuhan, China is being expanded from five major U.S. airports (SFO, LAX, JFK, ATL, and ORD) to all 20 U.S. airports with CDC quarantine stations. The Daniel K. Inouye International Airport in Honolulu is one of the 20 airports nationwide with a quarantine station under federal authority, specifically CDC and Customs and Border Protection (CBP).

People who have become sick after travel to China, particularly Hubei Province are advised to do the following:

- Seek medical care right away. Before you go to a doctor's office or emergency room, *call ahead and tell them about your recent travel and your symptoms.*
- Stay home. Except for seeking medical care, avoid contact with others.
- Do *not* travel while sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing.
- Wash hands often with clean soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.

"We investigate all reports of persons with potential 2019 novel coronavirus infection to quickly identify persons with likely infection as well as those who may have been exposed to them," said Dr. Sarah Park, State Epidemiologist. "Lab testing to confirm this infection is conducted at CDC in Atlanta, Georgia. This is the only U.S. laboratory that can conduct testing for the 2019 novel coronavirus at this time."

DOH also recommends that everyone get vaccinated for influenza ("the flu") to reduce the number of flu cases in Hawai'i clinics and hospitals. This will help reduce confusion as persons with influenza will have signs and symptoms like 2019-nCoV. DOH strongly recommends that residents six months and older protect themselves against flu by receiving the seasonal influenza vaccination.

DOH has extensive protocols in place for infectious disease outbreak control and prevention activities. The department works with federal, state, county, private, and non-profit organizations statewide on preparedness activities and prevention measures continually, this includes exercises and drills with EMS, hospitals, HI-EMA, Medical Reserve Corps, law enforcement, and other partners. For more information on public health preparedness activities in Hawai'i visit <https://health.hawaii.gov/prepare/about-us/office-of-public-health-preparedness/>

For information on the 2019-nCoV outbreak, including information for clinicians and public health professionals, visit the following websites.

- health.hawaii.gov/docd/advisories/novel-coronavirus-2019/
- www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html
- wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/watch/novel-coronavirus-china

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