An Update About COVID-19 From Eric Brooks Island County Emergency Director

There is concern about the situation regarding the COVID-19 Coronavirus in our community today. I am sharing directly with you the communication I have received from Island County Emergency Management:

Island County DEM and Island County Public Health have been actively communicating with local, regional and state partners to ensure our public messaging is consistent and our plans are appropriate with the current threat. We have more local meetings Monday morning to discuss public messaging, situational awareness, resource inventories, resource request processes, current and future plans/policy, and continuity of operations. We will also discuss meeting schedules and agendas.
For your situational awareness

- On February 28 and 29, a total of four cases of COVID-19 were identified. None of the individuals have traveled lately, so it can be assumed their illness was community-acquired. One person, with underlying health conditions, has died.
- In addition, a number of eastside first responders (i.e. fire fighters/paramedics) have been exposed to the coronavirus and, as a precaution, are under quarantine. Testing of potential new cases continues daily.

Public messaging

- COVID-19 is spreading globally and we can expect to see more cases locally. However, transmission of the virus is not occurring on a widespread basis.
- Most coronavirus illnesses are mild with fever and cough. The majority do not require hospital care. A much smaller percentage of cases are severe and may include pneumonia, particularly in elderly people and people with underlying medical conditions.
- While it’s understandable that people are concerned, there are specific actions they can take to reduce their risks:

  Personal hygiene -
  · More hand washing; less face touching. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
  · Cover your mouth/nose with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing.
Regular use of alcohol-based hand sanitizer covering all surfaces of the hands and rubbing them together until dry will decrease risk that the virus is transmitted to you or other people.

- Avoid contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home while you are sick and avoid close contact with others.

Be prepared at home -

- Have a plan to care for family members should they get sick or schools/offices be closed.
- Know your workplace telecommute options and school/daycare policies.
- Stock up on food supplies and prescription medications now, so you don’t have to leave your home if you or someone in your household becomes infected.

A public hotline has been set up by Washington State Dept of Health for individuals seeking information about their personal situation: 800-525-0127.

Thank you and I look forward to talking with you.

Eric

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