

February 26, 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Essex County Health Department (ECHD), along with county Office of Emergency Management, the Board of Supervisors, and University of Vermont Health Network – Elizabethtown Community Hospital, are closely following the expanding outbreak of respiratory illness caused by a novel coronavirus – the virus that causes COVID-19. The situation is rapidly evolving; however, this team continues to remain ready to respond to COVID-19, should the need arise. Readiness activities include participating in regular and ongoing calls with the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH), following guidance from state health officials and the CDC, communicating with staff, partners, and local officials, and keeping emergency plans up-to-date.

The virus that causes COVID-19 is spreading from person-to-person, with new outbreaks detected outside of mainland China. Currently, the immediate risk to most Americans is low and there are ongoing strategies in place to minimize any potential public health impacts. Although the latest guidance from the CDC indicates that a community spread is likely, our county health and safety partners are working with regional, state and federal authorities to adopt measures to protect human health and respond appropriately. We are poised to promote health, prevent disease, and protect public health while maintaining privacy and confidentiality of individuals.

As with any communicable illness, there are preventive measures everyone can take to help reduce their risk of becoming sick. These measures include: getting a flu vaccine and taking antivirals (if prescribed); practicing good personal hygiene and frequent handwashing; disinfecting commonly touched surfaces; avoiding close contact with people who are ill; and distancing yourself from others if you are sick. Personal preparedness – for any emergency – is always a good idea. Keep a supply of food, water, and medications on hand in case you become sick and cannot travel to obtain needed items. Go to www.ready.gov to learn more about building an emergency kit for yourself and/or your family. The CDC also offers specific actions that can be taken by individuals, communities, schools, and businesses to help slow the spread of illnesses:

<https://www.cdc.gov/nonpharmaceutical-interventions/index.html>

For individuals considering travel out of the United States, we advise checking the CDC Travel Health Notices web site <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices>. These notices are updated regularly. It is always important to talk to your physician or health care provider about what precautions you should take before and during any international travel.

For accurate, up-to-date information on COVID-19, please visit:

NYSDOH <https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/coronavirus/>

CDC <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

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