



Joint Information Center on COVID-19 for the State of Florida

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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The State of Florida Issues Updates on COVID-19

TALLAHASSEE — The State of Florida is responding to COVID-19. In an effort to keep Florida residents and visitors safe and aware regarding the status of the virus, the Florida Department of Health will be issuing this update every day, seven days per week.

Yesterday, March 9, Governor Ron DeSantis issued Executive Order 20-52, declaring a State of Emergency for COVID-19. By declaring a State of Emergency, Governor DeSantis is ensuring that state and local governments have the resources and flexibility they need to prepare and respond.

COVID-19 UPDATE

Port Everglades Advisory

Last night, the Department announced a new positive case of COVID-19 in Broward County. The Department, through an extensive epidemiological investigation, identified this new case as the third positive case of COVID-19 associated with Port Everglades in Broward County, Florida. Further, all three cases are connected to or employed by Metro Cruise Services – a company that operates at Port Everglades.

- The Florida Department of Health recommends all individuals experiencing symptoms who have recently traveled through Port Everglades to immediately contact their County Health Department or health care provider and self-isolate for 14 days.
- The Department also recommends employees of Metro Cruise Services at Port Everglades with any association to these cases self-isolate at home.
- The Department is working to connect with all employees at Metro Cruise Services who may have come into contact with the three individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 to provide the employees with the appropriate guidance and monitoring.
- The Department is working in close consultation with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on this investigation.
- CDC recommends that individuals with recent travel history on a cruise to monitor their health for 14 days and, if they develop symptoms, to immediately self-isolate and contact their County Health Department or health care provider.

COVID-19 Cases

| Florida Residents Diagnosed in Florida | | | | |
|--|--------------|-----|--------|---------------------------------------|
| | County | Age | Sex | Known History of International Travel |
| 1 | Manatee | 63 | Male | No |
| 2 | Hillsborough | 29 | Female | Yes |
| 3 | Santa Rosa | 71 | Male | Yes |
| 4 | Broward | 75 | Male | No |
| 5 | Broward | 65 | Male | No |
| 6 | Lee | 77 | Female | Yes |
| 7 | Lee | 77 | Male | Yes |
| 8 | Charlotte | 54 | Female | Yes |
| 9 | Okaloosa | 61 | Female | Yes |
| 10 | Volusia | 66 | Female | Yes |
| 11 | Manatee | 81 | Female | Yes |
| 12 | Broward | 67 | Male | No |
| 13 | Volusia | 60 | Female | Yes |
| 14 | Broward | 69 | Female | No |

International Travel Advisory

The Florida Department of Health is advising all individuals who have traveled internationally to follow **CDC guidelines**, summarized below:

- **Level 3:** CDC recommends 14-day self-isolation and social distancing upon return to the United States. Social distancing includes avoiding going out in public and close personal interactions. If you become symptomatic, immediately self-isolate and contact your County Health Department or health care provider.
- **Level 2 and Cruises:** Travelers should monitor their health and limit interactions with others for 14 days after returning to the United States. If you become symptomatic, immediately self-isolate and contact your county health department or health care provider.
- For more information regarding current CDC travel advisories related to COVID-19, visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>

A person that experiences a fever and symptoms of respiratory illness, such as fever, cough or shortness of breath, within 14 days after travel from China, Italy, Iran, South Korea, Japan and any other destination under [CDC travel advisory](#) should call ahead to their health care provider or local County Health Department (CHD) and mention their recent travel or close contact.

If a person has had close contact with someone showing these symptoms who has recently traveled from this area or been in contact with a person with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19, they should call ahead to a health care professional and the County Health Department. The health care professional will work with the Department to determine if the person should be tested for COVID-19.

Nile Cruise Advisory

The Florida Department of Health is advising all individuals who traveled on a river cruise on the Nile River in Egypt in February 2020 to self-isolate for 14 days following their date of return to the United States.

Several passengers in the United States recently developed symptoms and have been confirmed to be infected with coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), including two positive cases in Florida.

COVID Public Website and Call Center

Please visit the Department's dedicated [COVID-19 webpage](#) for information and guidance regarding COVID-19 in Florida.

For any other questions related to COVID-19 in Florida, please contact the Department's dedicated COVID-19 Call Center by calling **1-(866) 779-6121**. **The Call Center is available 24 hours per day**. Inquiries may also be emailed to COVID-19@flhealth.gov.

What you Should Know

COVID-19 can spread from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth, including when an individual coughs or sneezes. These droplets may land on objects and surfaces. Other people may contract COVID-19 by touching these objects or surfaces, then touching their eyes, nose or mouth.

Symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, cough and shortness of breath. Symptoms may appear in as few as two days or as many as 14 days following exposure. Most people recover from COVID-19 without needing special treatment. The elderly and those with underlying medical problems like high blood pressure, heart problems and diabetes, are more likely to develop serious illness.

There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19. The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to the virus. The Department recommends everyday preventive actions to help stop the spread of respiratory diseases, including:

- Avoiding close contact with people who are sick;
- Staying home when you are sick and avoiding contact with persons in poor health;
- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands;
- Covering your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then disposing of the tissue;
- Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating, 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. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty; and
- Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.

CDC does not recommend that asymptomatic, healthy people 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 health care facility).

Actions the State has Taken to Prepare for and Respond to COVID-19

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

- Governor Ron DeSantis issued [Executive Order 20-52](#) declaring a State of Emergency for COVID-19.
- Governor Ron DeSantis directed the Florida Division of Emergency Management to activate to Level II to coordinate the state's response to COVID-19.
- Governor Ron DeSantis issued [Executive Order 20-51](#) directing the State Surgeon General to declare a public health emergency.

- State Surgeon General Dr. Scott Rivkees declared a public health emergency for the novel coronavirus in Florida.
- Established an incident management team to coordinate response operations.
- Activated a dedicated incident command post for on-site response activities.
- Conducted three public health and healthcare stakeholders conference calls to provide statewide updates on the current outbreak situation, response actions, and guidance for pandemic planning. Over five hundred participants joined the calls. Calls are scheduled for each Wednesday at 2:00 EST.
- Participated with the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) on statewide conference calls with nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and hospitals.
- Established a public call-center for questions regarding COVID-19.
- Developed and distributed the communications approved COVID-19 Presentation to CHDs for use at community meetings.
- Developed and implemented protocols for investigation, surveillance and monitoring for COVID-19 to rapidly detect and contain cases.
- Established mechanisms for on-going monitoring and coordination with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) regarding epidemiological activities.
- Distributed CDC Interim Guidance for Public Health Personnel Evaluating Persons Under Investigation (PUIs) and Asymptomatic Close Contacts of Confirmed Cases at Their Home or Non-Home Residential Settings to County Health Departments
- Distributed the updated Clinician Screening Tool for Identifying Persons Under Investigation for Coronavirus Disease and a healthcare provider letter regarding Enhanced Surveillance and Preparedness for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) to associations, licensed providers, Health Care Coalitions (HCCs) and County Health Departments (CHD).
- Implemented testing at all three State Public Health Laboratories.
- Distributed updated CDC guidance for schools to CHDs and the Department of Education.
- Distributed updated Laboratory Guidance regarding implementation of testing at State Public Health Laboratories.

AGENCY FOR HEALTHCARE ADMINISTRATION

- The Agency for Healthcare Administration (AHCA) opened an event on the Emergency Status System for hospitals to enter census information and emergency room status updates.
- AHCA shared key guidance including CDC and the department information regarding the importance of screening visitors, infection control protocol and hygiene best practices.
- AHCA hosted a statewide call for nursing homes in conjunction with the Florida Health Care Association on Tuesday, March 3, with 1,000 participants. Secretary Mayhew and Surgeon General Rivkees addressed critical issues impacting these providers such as restricting and screening visitors.
- AHCA hosted a statewide call for assisted living facilities, intermediate care facilities, Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) group homes and adult family care homes on Tuesday, March 3, with nearly 1,500 participants. Secretary Mayhew, Surgeon General Rivkees and APD Director Palmer addressed critical issues impacting these providers such as restricting and screening visitors.
- AHCA hosted a statewide call for hospitals in conjunction with the Florida Hospital Association on Wednesday, March 4, with 84 locations participating. Secretary Mayhew and Surgeon General Rivkees addressed critical issues impacting Florida hospitals.
- AHCA hosted a statewide call for nursing homes in conjunction with the Florida Health Care Association on Friday, March 6, with 524 participants. Secretary Mayhew and Surgeon General Rivkees addressed critical issues impacting these providers such as a newly developed visitor screening toolkit and recent memos from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.
- AHCA hosted a statewide call for hospitals in conjunction with LeadingAge Florida and the Florida Life Care Residents Association on Friday, March 6, with 1,000 participants. Secretary Mayhew and Surgeon General Rivkees addressed critical issues impacting senior populations and nursing homes.
- AHCA hosted a call with the Florida Health Care Association and Florida Hospital Association to facilitate a conversation regarding facility transfers and the screening of facility visitors/developed toolkit on Saturday, March 7.

- AHCA expanded the event on the Emergency Status System to collect isolation beds for hospitals effective Saturday, March 7.
- AHCA and the department established regularly scheduled calls with long-term care facilities on Tuesday, March 10.
- AHCA sent CDC infection prevention and control guidelines to hospitals across the state.

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

- At the direction of Governor DeSantis, FDOT Secretary Kevin J. Thibault, along with Surgeon General Dr. Scott Rivkees, hosted a conference call with all Florida ports and their governing bodies as well as all public use airports to discuss Florida's ongoing response to the COVID-19 virus.
- FDOT Secretary Thibault and staff from the department will be hosting weekly conference calls with all passenger seaports and public use airports to provide updates related to COVID-19.
- COVID-19 educational materials are being posted in FDOT facilities, which include welcome centers, service plazas and rest areas across the state.
- SunRail has posted COVID-19 educational materials inside all trains and on all platforms, focusing on areas near entrances and bathrooms.
- SunRail trains are being cleaned and sanitized daily and SunRail staff have been provided sanitizing towelettes and encouraged to wash their hands frequently throughout the day.
- FDOT is providing hand sanitizer and posting COVID-19 educational materials at its public meetings across the state.

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

- Florida Department of Corrections (FDC) has no known or suspected cases of COVID-19 within its correctional institutions at this time.
- FDC's Office of Health Services coordinates with the department for guidance on any type of outbreak and is closely monitoring new information as it is disseminated from Florida department and the CDC.
- FDC has a plan in place and dedicated staff members trained in the prevention and containment of infectious diseases.
- FDC has stood up its Incident Command System in response to COVID-19.
- Education has been provided to staff, inmates and visitors to prevent the spread of any infectious disease, including COVID-19.
- Precautions are in place at facilities to protect inmates and staff from exposure to flu, COVID-19 or any other respiratory illness and are being followed per CDC recommendations.

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF STATE

- The Florida Department of State (DOS) has been in contact with the Supervisors of Elections for Hillsborough, Lake, Leon, Manatee, Palm Beach and Sarasota Counties to determine their needs specifically as it relates to supplies. The supervisors have been encouraged to connect with their county emergency management department for meeting these resource needs.
- DOS is actively wiping down public spaces including all DOS maintained properties, reception areas, and restrooms with bleach or disinfectant wipes to mitigate the spread of germs.

OFFICE OF INSURANCE REGULATION

- OIR Insurance Commissioner David Altmaier is actively engaged with insurers and key partners at the state and national level regarding COVID-19. Commissioner Altmaier is collaborating with other state insurance commissioners and the National Association of Insurance Commissioners to share information and resources.
- OIR has issued [Informational Memorandum OIR-20-01M](#) to all health insurers and health maintenance organizations, directing them to:

- Use every channel available to them to communicate with their policyholders and share official CDC and Department of Health information;
 - Devote resources to inform consumers of available benefits, quickly respond to inquiries, and avoid and dispel misinformation;
 - Work with public health officials to do everything possible to prepare and respond; and
 - Consider all practicable options to reduce the barriers of cost-sharing for testing and treatment of COVID-19.
- OIR is reaching out to insurers regarding their response to COVID-19 and working with insurers to make sure they are properly communicating to consumers.
- OIR has activated its incident management team and has met to review disaster response procedures.

AGENCY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

- APD sent additional preventative tips to APD providers, Waiver Support coordinators, and APD employees.
- APD continues to share/promote all related DOH social media content.

DEPARTMENT OF ELDER AFFAIRS

- Department of Health guidance has been sent to the Executive Directors at Area Agencies for Aging; they, in turn, are sending that information to their Lead Providers and Agencies.

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

- The Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) continues to encourage businesses to follow the [“Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers”](#) issued by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- DEO has shared situational information and updates including the DOH COVID-19 press release, DOH website and call center number with ESF 18 partners and business contacts.
- The Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association (FRLA) and Florida Retail Federation, and the Florida Chamber of Commerce, in coordination with DEO, are working to provide health safety information and coordination with partners, including how to address potential local supply issues.
- DEO is coordinating with CareerSource Florida, local workforce boards, and other public-private partners.
- DEO has collaborated with partners at EFI and VISIT FLORIDA and is working to provide business partners, ESF-18 partners, Chamber members and the Economic Development Councils throughout the state a toolkit to disperse to their business communities on preventative actions to take, as well as email and social media messaging they can use in their communities.

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

- FDLE is coordinating ESF-16 providing updates weekly and as needed and securing staffing.
- FDLE’s Office of Mutual Aid prepared and distributed a law enforcement guide on COVID-19 for law enforcement partners and state agencies.
- Florida’s Homeland Security Advisor participates in weekly calls with the Department of Homeland Security Assistant Secretary and other Advisors around the country to coordinate response and identify best practices.
- FDLE regions are working with the Regional Domestic Security Task Forces to prepare any responses needed.
- FDLE is reviewing its COOP and determining which members can work from home if necessary.

- FDLE is in the process of placing additional hand sanitizing stations in high traffic areas and opening certain interior doors to minimize touching and prevent spread of the virus.
- FDLE is in regular communications with the Florida Department of Health and our ESF-16 partners regarding COVID-19 preparations.
- FDLE's Mutual Aid team is holding weekly conference calls with the State Emergency Operations Center and will begin sending out situational reports to the FDLE Regions this week.

VOLUNTEER FLORIDA

- Volunteer Florida agency is coordinating with the Florida Department of Elder Affairs to see how we can assist with spreading information to seniors.
- Volunteer Florida's Emergency Management Department is having initial conversations with partners to determine what could be needed and what safety precautions need to be considered if volunteers are utilized.
- Volunteer Florida agency is continuing to share information about preventative measures that should be taken with staff, Commissioners, Foundation Board Members and sub-grantees.

About the Florida Department of Health

The Florida Department of Health, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and Twitter at [@HealthyFla](#). For more information please visit www.FloridaHealth.gov.

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