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City of San Francisco Moves Proactively to Prepare for Possible Novel Coronavirus Activity in the Community

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Although there are still zero confirmed cases of novel coronavirus in San Francisco residents, the global situation is changing rapidly. Mayor Breed, Department of Public Health, and Department of Emergency Management take action to protect community health.

San Francisco, CA — Mayor London N. Breed today made an emergency declaration to strengthen the City's preparedness to respond to COVID-19 (novel coronavirus). She was joined by Health Director Dr. Grant Colfax and Executive Director of the Department of Emergency Management Mary Ellen Carroll in this action to surge resources and capabilities, and ensure San Francisco is as ready as possible in the event that the new virus comes to our community.

"Although there are still zero confirmed cases in San Francisco residents, the global picture is changing rapidly, and we need to step-up preparedness," said Mayor Breed. "We see the virus spreading in new parts of the world every day, and we are taking the necessary steps to protect San Franciscans from harm."

"San Francisco is united and prepared to address any possible spread of the novel coronavirus to San Francisco," said Board of Supervisors President Norman Yee. "We have one of the most renowned medical systems of care here and we have a long and proven track record of being able to protect, treat, and care for our residents."

The declaration of a local emergency is a legal document that will mobilize City resources, accelerate emergency planning, streamline staffing, coordinate agencies across the city, allow for future reimbursement by the state and federal governments and raise awareness throughout San Francisco about how everyone can prepare in the event that COVID-19 (novel coronavirus) appears in our community. Santa Clara and San Diego counties have issued similar declarations to bolster their preparedness.

The San Francisco declaration is effective immediately for seven days, and it will be voted on by the Board of Supervisors on Tuesday, March 3rd.

San Francisco has been working diligently to prevent COVID-19, and to implement containment efforts if there are San Franciscans who test positive for the new virus. The Department of Public Health activated its Departmental Operations Center on January 21, marshalling internal resources and leadership to focus on the clinical, epidemiological, and community response. The Health Department has worked with local hospitals to identify isolation rooms, and health care clinics are screening patients for travel history and symptoms. The City opened its Emergency Operations Center (EOC) on January 27, bringing the strength of the entire San Francisco response system to focus on this developing situation.

San Francisco is further expanding the EOC because of today's emergency declaration. In addition to the establishment of the Community Branch, the EOC will expand the Planning Section, Logistics Section and the Health and Human Services Branch. As a result, the City can accelerate the development of emergency plans should COVID-19 emerge in San Francisco.

"This is a global outbreak that is entering a new phase, and we must be prepared," said Dr. Grant Colfax, Director of Health. "We have been working with elected officials, other city agencies, the public and private health care system, schools, businesses and community organizations to ensure that we as a city are well informed and positioned to respond and do our best to mitigate the impact of the new virus, if it emerges in San Francisco. Today's declaration reinforces that this is not business as usual. We must be confident that our local readiness efforts are as robust as possible to protect the health of San Francisco residents. This declaration gives us more tools to be even more prepared."

"Given the high volume of travel between San Francisco and mainland China, there is a growing likelihood that we will see cases of COVID-19 eventually," said Dr. Tomas Aragon, San Francisco Health Officer. "Most people who are in self-quarantine at home are eager to cooperate and understand the importance of these actions. We are prioritizing children, people who live in congregate settings and vulnerable populations as we plan to reduce the potential for harm from the virus in the community. We have been working closely with the Chinese community, who are so impacted by this situation, and also at risk for stigma and discrimination."

"Planning, responding and recovering from any emergency requires a whole community approach," said Mary Ellen Carroll, Executive Director, San Francisco Department of Emergency Management. "San Francisco is establishing a Community Branch in our Emergency Operations Center comprised of community, faith, business and education partners. As a result, community and government partners can work together to identify and coordinate our response to emerging issues."

Globally, there have been more than 80,000 cases and 2,700 deaths since the disease first emerged in Wuhan, China in December 2019. While the majority of cases and deaths have taken place in China, the epicenter of the illness, the virus has now spread to about 30 countries, including the United States. Currently, there are 53 confirmed cases in this country, including 10 in California. While San Francisco has no confirmed cases in city residents, three COVID-19 patients from other counties have been treated in San Francisco hospitals. Given the global patterns that are being seen, there is a growing likelihood of cases in San Francisco.

The federal government has worked to contain the virus by imposing strict travel restrictions for people returning from mainland China. As of February, foreign nationals who have traveled to China within the past 14 days are not permitted entry into the U.S., unless they are immediate family of U.S. citizens or permanent residents. All U.S. citizens returning from Hubei Province, China are subject to a mandatory 14-day quarantine by the federal government. U.S. citizens returning from other parts of mainland China who have symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath) are subject to a mandatory quarantine. Those returning from mainland China without symptoms are directed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to self-quarantine at home with monitoring by their local health department. In San Francisco, the Health Department is monitoring hundreds of returning travelers. Risk for the virus is based on travel history and contacts, not race, ethnicity, or culture.

If we experience a cluster of COVID-19 cases or a local outbreak, every sector of San Francisco will have a role to play in ensuring the community's health. Today's declaration provides a structure to support expanded efforts. For example, schools should be planning how they would manage potential closures, and businesses ought to look at their work-from-home policies and sick leave in order to support people who may need to self-quarantine.

The best way for all San Franciscans to reduce their risk of getting sick, as with seasonal colds or the flu, will still apply to prevent COVID-19 if it begins to circulate in the community:

- Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds;
- Cover your cough or sneeze;
- Stay home if you are sick;
- Get your flu shot to protect against flu or symptoms similar to COVID-19; and
- If you have recently returned from a country with ongoing COVID-19 infections, monitor your health and follow the instructions of public health officials.

You can also prepare for the possible disruption caused by an outbreak:

- Make sure you have a supply of all essential medications for your family;
- Make a child care plan if you or a care giver are sick;
- Make arrangements about how your family will manage a school closure; and
- Make a plan for how you can care for a sick family member without getting sick yourself.

Stay up to date on this rapidly evolving situation by visiting www.sfdph.org or www.sf72.org and the CDC's website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov>.

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