NEWS RELEASE

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El Paso, Texas

First Presumptive Positive Case of Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Reported in El Paso

The City of El Paso Department of Public Health (DPH) is reporting the first presumptive positive test result for COVID-19 in the area. The male patient in his 40's who has history of recent domestic travel. He is now recovering at home.

The test was performed at the City of El Paso Department of Public Health Laboratory. DPH epidemiology staff is identifying any close contacts of the patient while he was sick so they can be closely monitored for symptoms.

Preliminary information about COVID-19 shows that about 80 percent of cases are mild and most people do not need hospitalization. However, older adults and people with underlying health conditions like heart disease, lung disease and diabetes are at a greater risk of complications.

"It is important that our community realize that the COVID-19 virus is not an airborne disease and it requires a mode of transmission such as a cough or sneeze," said Dr. Hector Ocaranza, City/County Health Authority. "The Department of Public Health and our partnering agencies in West Texas have been preparing for the arrival of COVID-19 since it was first identified in China and began spreading to other countries. Planning has been going on continuously for laboratory testing, public health investigation and isolation and care for people who test positive."

DPH officials continue to urge residents to stay up-to-date with the latest information by subscribing to both the City and DPH social media platforms, and to visit www.EPHealth.com or www.EPSalud.com for updates. Additionally the 2-1-1 Texas Information and Referral Center is available 24/7. Callers can dial 2-1-1 and select option 1 for more information.

Human coronaviruses like the one that causes COVID-19 are most commonly spread through coughing and sneezing, personal contact like shaking hands, and touching a surface with the virus and then touching your eyes, nose or mouth. There are simple steps everyone can take to help prevent spreading them:
   • Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
   • Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
   • Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
   • Stay home when you are sick.
   • Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
   • Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

If you are showing the signs and symptoms of COVID-19, you are asked to call your local provider or hospital and let them know about your condition before arriving at the facility.

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