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**NEWS
RELEASE**

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Public Health Laboratory to Test for COVID-19 Locally

EL PASO, Texas – The Department of Public Health (DPH) announced today that its laboratory can now test respiratory samples for the novel coronavirus COVID-19 here in El Paso.

The Public Health Laboratory in El Paso is one of only 120 domestic laboratories that is part of the Laboratory Response Network (LRN) with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). While there are still no cases of COVID-19 in El Paso, DPH continues to work hand in hand with other state, local, and federal officials in a united front against this disease.

“Our ability to test for COVID-19 here in El Paso will greatly reduce the turnaround time to get results for a patient. If we ship out samples, it will take up to 72 hours to receive results, but testing here will shorten that time to as little as four hours,” said Robert Resendes, Public Health Director.

According to the CDC, the LRN is charged with the task of maintaining this integrated network of laboratories that can respond to bioterrorism, emerging infectious diseases, and other public health emergencies. Health officials in El Paso stress that as a Biosafety Level-3 laboratory, the Public Health Laboratory is well equipped to handle samples with proper measures in place to protect Medical Laboratory Scientists as well as the community. They say the Department of Public Health has already dealt with other new diseases including Ebola and Zika virus.

“As an LRN Laboratory, we are proud to have the confidence of the CDC to be given immediate access to Emergency Use Authorization testing for the City of El Paso,” said Darlene Tarango, Laboratory Manager. “The community can rest assured we are on the forefront of protecting their health and safety.”

DPH Officials continue to stress individual prevention strategies against infection including practicing the 4 C’s. This includes COVERING your cough and sneezes, CLEANING your hands often by practicing good handwashing techniques, CONTAINING the spread of disease by staying home if you are sick, and CALLING your health care provider if you are ill and experiencing flu-like symptoms with a high fever.

Updated information continues to be available via www.EPHealth.com and www.EPSalud.com.

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