



HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Public Health

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Inyo County Health Officer declares a Public Health Emergency

In order to protect the health of our community, the Inyo County Public Health Officer, Dr. James Richardson, declared a local health emergency today. Although no confirmed cases have been identified in Inyo or Mono counties, Dr. Richardson anticipates cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) in the Eastern Sierra in the immediate future. Declaring a local health emergency will enhance the County's ability to prepare and respond to cases when they are identified. The declaration of a local health emergency gives the Inyo County Public Health Officer special additional legal authorities to protect the health of the community and to obtain additional resources as needed, as there is an imminent and proximate threat to public health from the introduction of COVID-19 in Inyo County.

There is no current confirmed case of COVID-19 in Inyo County. However, our area is experiencing a heightened number of people reporting cold and flu-like symptoms. Medical providers may be ordering testing for COVID-19 for some of these individuals when symptoms cannot be attributed directly to influenza or another identified medical cause. This virus has sickened more than 167,000 people worldwide with nearly 3,500 of these in the United States and over 390 in California. The disease has killed over 6,400 worldwide, most over the age of 60.

Inyo County's Public Health office began its response efforts over a month ago and the team has been actively identifying and monitoring individuals who may be at risk of exposure to COVID-19. They have been working closely with local health care providers and neighboring partners in Mono County where their Health Officer declared a local emergency on March 15, 2020. A Department Operations Center was opened in response to COVID-19 on February 27, 2020 and the team has been providing information and guidance to the local community.

Based on guidance from the California Department of Public Health, Dr. Richardson is recommending those in the Owens Valley who are age 65 or older and/or persons of any age who have underlying health conditions, such as compromised immune systems, heart disease, lung disease and diabetes, limit non-essential travel and avoid public gatherings of

more than 10 people.

The California Department of Public Health and Inyo County Public Health recommend everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory viruses, including:

- It's flu season, get vaccinated – it's not too late.
- 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 (containing 60% or more alcohol).
- 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.
- People experiencing worsening symptoms should seek medical attention – when possible, call ahead if you are experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath).

Additional guidelines have been issued by the State of California for entertainment venues and public gatherings. These guidelines are available, along with up-to-date information on the CDPH website: <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Guidance.aspx>