COVID-19 Talking Points for Tuesday 3/10/2020

Situation Update

- New coronavirus (COVID-19) is a serious public health threat globally.

- Last week the state health department announced the first positive test results for COVID-19 in Texas – all of these cases are travel related but we need to be vigilant to keep our communities safe as this situation continues to quickly evolve.

- Last month we had repatriation cases – that is where Americans returned from travel overseas and were quarantined. We know the federal government is sending more repatriation cases to Texas so we may see more repatriation-associated cases here shortly. Over the past several months, the state of Texas has been preparing for this moment, and we are confident in the steps we have taken to safeguard our communities against the coronavirus.

- We have protocols in place, and our state agencies and personnel are trained and ready to respond.
    - Our top priority is public health and safety, and we urge all Texans to follow the preventive guidelines provided by the Texas Department of State Health Services.

- From the research into COVID-19, we know that about 80 percent of cases are mild with most people not needing hospitalization.
    - But we also know that some people are at higher risk of getting very sick from COVID-19 – like older adults and folks with some chronic medical conditions.
    - We need to come together and do the things that will keep all of us safer, like washing our hands and staying home while sick. Higher risk populations should also consider social distancing, like avoiding big crowds, handshaking and limiting close contact when out in public
    - Again, this situation is rapidly evolving and city and county officials have the authority to make decisions about closures and event cancellations in their jurisdiction. Those types of decisions are made at the local level. The people closest to the situation need to be the ones making that call.

How to Protect Yourself and Others

Coronaviruses 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. Reducing spread as quickly as possible will help protect our most vulnerable populations, such as the elderly. There are simple steps everyone can take to help prevent spreading them:

- Wash hands often for 20 seconds and encourage others to do the same.

- If no soap and water available, use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue, then throw the tissue away.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Disinfect surfaces, buttons, handles, knobs and other places touched often.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

Masks recommended for sick people only. Well people don't need them.

What to Do If You Feel Sick
- Symptoms of COVID -19 may show up 2-14 days after exposure and may include fever, cough and shortness of breath.
    - General Population: If you are in generally good health and have a mild illness, stay home and take care of yourself like you would for the flu. If symptoms worsen, call your doctor.
    - At-Risk Populations: If you are 65 years or older and/or have other medical problems like heart disease, lung disease, diabetes, high blood pressure or cancer – and have fever or symptoms - call your doctor. If you are not sick enough to be hospitalized, you can recover at home.

How to Get Tested for COVID-19
- Your doctor will help make the decision whether you should get tested for coronavirus. Some public health labs in Texas are now testing.
- Testing should not occur for individuals without symptoms.

Reliable Information Sources
- Every Texan plays an important part in keeping our communities as safe as possible – practice good hygiene, stay home if you are sick, and stay informed.
- The public can find up-to-date coronavirus information at https://www.dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/, and on DSHS's Facebook, Twitter and Instagram at @TexasDSHS. Also visit the CDC's website at cdc.gov/coronavirus.