

News Release

For immediate release
March 4, 2020

For more information contact:
Karen Sullivan
Office: 406.497.5003

Unified Health Command Prepares for Spread of Coronavirus, COVID-19

Butte, MT – The Unified Health Command (UHC), made up of the city and county of Butte Silver Bow, Butte Silver Bow Healthcare Coalition Partners, and St. James Healthcare has taken several steps to prepare for the possible spread of the coronavirus known as COVID-19 in Butte Silver-Bow County. To date, there are NO CASES of COVID-19 in Montana.

Since January, members of the UHC have been on alert monitoring the evolving situation and preparing to take necessary measures to curb the spread of disease. Activating the Unified Health Command and proactively working with the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services are some measures that have been taken to prepare for potential cases of COVID-19 in Butte-Silver Bow County. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advised about the importance of our health systems and first responders having the resources they need to respond and that the public has the information necessary to begin making individual plans.

As of March 4, 2020, there were more than 90,000 cases of COVID-19 worldwide, including more than 3,000 deaths. According to the CDC there are close to 150 cases in the United States. There have been eleven deaths to date in the United States.

In the state of Montana 26 returning travelers from China have been monitored since February 1st and 19 have successfully completed the 14 day monitoring period. Seven individuals are currently being monitored. None of the individuals who have been monitored have been located in Butte Silver Bow County.

Cases of COVID-19 have ranged from people with little to no symptoms to severe illness and death. The CDC expects cases to continue to be confirmed, and the UHC wants families and individuals to prepare to take action to help prevent the spread of the virus.

The website Ready.gov provides family emergency plans and checklists to help you prepare for disease outbreaks and other situations. The best way to stop the spread of infectious viruses is by washing your hands, covering coughs and sneezes, cleaning surfaces and staying home if you are sick.

To date, the UHC has:

- Activated a unified command structure and members will meet regularly or as often as needed.
- Interacted with Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services and state Department of Emergency Services to establish response relationships.
- Begun monitoring and conserving healthcare facility supplies of personal protective equipment, including masks and gloves.

- A Joint Information Center will be setup to provide information and respond to news media requests.
- Established a public health information line for Butte Silver-Bow at 406.497.5008.
- Worked to discourage rumors and misinformation.

As this situation evolves, the public can find accurate and timely information on COVID-19 through the CDC's website, www.cdc.gov/COVID19 , and social media channels.

###

