



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

Monday, March 2, 2020

Contact: Mayor's Office of Communications, 415-554-6131

**\*\*\* PRESS RELEASE \*\*\***

**CITY OF SAN FRANCISCO TAKES ACTION FOLLOWING  
EMERGENCY DECLARATION TO PREPARE FOR NOVEL  
CORONAVIRUS**

*City leaders provide update on new local testing efforts, expanded staffing deployments, and efforts to protect the most vulnerable populations and prepare for possibility of community spread of the virus*

**San Francisco, CA** – Today, Mayor London N. Breed and San Francisco Public Health and Emergency officials announced new plans to protect public health and strengthen preparations for potential community spread of novel coronavirus in San Francisco. These plans include new local testing for COVID-19 by the San Francisco Department of Public Health (DPH), prioritization for protection of vulnerable populations, and increased City staff and volunteer deployment.

Each of these policies builds on the actions already underway since the City activated its Emergency Operations Center on January 27<sup>th</sup> and declared a Local Emergency on Tuesday, February 25<sup>th</sup>. While San Francisco has no confirmed cases of COVID-19 as of this announcement, public health officials expect confirmed cases soon, particularly with the changing patterns in the Bay Area and the new local testing, which will speed up the time it takes to get test results.

“San Francisco is continuing to focus our preparations on protecting the health of all of our residents, especially those who are most vulnerable to this virus,” said Mayor Breed. “Our public health workers and City staff have been working relentlessly to prepare and conduct outreach into the communities, and we will expand on these efforts and work with all of our regional, state, and federal partners as this situation evolves. We will continue to update the public with information as it comes in and we encourage everyone to take all precautions necessary to take of yourselves, your families, and your communities.”

As of 12:00 p.m. today, the new coronavirus has sickened more than 89,000 people worldwide and caused more than 3,000 deaths. The numbers are changing rapidly. California has about 40 cases of COVID-19 – a combination of people from repatriation flights and those identified by local public health departments. These numbers are likely to increase.

“As the situation changes rapidly in the Bay Area and on the west coast, we expect to have confirmed cases in San Francisco and are preparing for community spread of the virus,” said Dr. Grant Colfax, Director of Health. “It’s not a matter of if, but when. The Health Department will prioritize protecting the populations that are most vulnerable to becoming very sick or dying if

1 DR. CARLTON B. GOODLETT PLACE, ROOM 200  
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94102-4681  
TELEPHONE: (415) 554-6141



they get COVID-19. That includes the elderly and people with chronic diseases and underlying health conditions.”

“The San Francisco Department of Public Health and the San Francisco Department of Emergency Management have led our City’s response efforts since January. We are grateful for the contributions of all city departments and community partners to assist in our preparedness,” said Mary Ellen Carroll, Executive Director, San Francisco Department of Emergency Management. “This week’s further activation of disaster service workers and volunteer organizations builds on San Francisco’s aggressive strategy to bolster our preparedness for COVID-19.”

The best way for all San Franciscans to reduce their risk of getting sick, as with seasonal colds or the flu, will still apply to prevent COVID-19 if it begins to circulate in the community:

- Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds;
- Cover your cough or sneeze;
- Stay home if you are sick;
- Get your flu shot to protect against flu or symptoms similar to COVID-19; and
- If you have recently returned from a country or region with ongoing COVID-19 infections, monitor your health and follow the instructions of public health officials.

You can also prepare for the possible disruption caused by an outbreak:

- Make sure you have a supply of all essential medications for your family;
- Make a child care plan if you or a care giver are sick;
- Make arrangements about how your family will manage a school closure; and
- Make a plan for how you can care for a sick family member without getting sick yourself.

Stay up to date on this rapidly evolving situation by visiting [www.sfdph.org](http://www.sfdph.org) or [www.sf72.org](http://www.sf72.org) and the CDC’s website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov>.

### **LOCAL TESTING EFFORTS BY SFDPH**

In a benefit to our local efforts, the San Francisco Department of Public Health lab began local testing for COVID-19 on Monday, March 2. The local lab will conduct tests seven days a week, shortening the turnaround time for test results, which previously had to be sent to the CDC in Atlanta. The CDC lab sent results back in three to seven days, and we expect the local lab to provide results in one to two days. The testing process will remain the same. Providers who have patients with suspected COVID-19 will consult with the DPH Communicable Disease team that will contact CDC to determine if they meet the criteria for testing.

The CDC expanded testing criteria last week beyond people with symptoms who had traveled to a country with COVID-19 cases, close contacts of people with COVID-19 who develop symptoms, or health care workers who treated COVID-19 patients who develop symptoms to include people hospitalized with pneumonia, with no clear diagnosis for their symptoms. The DPH lab will conduct the tests locally based on the expanded criteria. It is important for the



public to understand that there is no on-demand testing. The test kits from the CDC are limited and testing will be done only after consultation between local health officials and the CDC.

### **EXPANDED EMERGENCY STAFFING SUPPORT**

Since San Francisco's emergency declaration on Tuesday, February 25<sup>th</sup> more than two dozen Disaster Service Workers were activated to support advanced emergency planning efforts, operations and community education and engagement.

Over the course of the week, the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) developed alternative housing options, streamlined protocols for priority resource requests, and developed and disseminated COVID-19 health and preparedness information in English, Chinese, Spanish and Filipino. In addition to these efforts, outreach staff have participated in more than 30 outreach events throughout San Francisco since late January.

Beginning this week, San Francisco will activate more than 50 additional Disaster Service Workers. Additional personnel may include but are not limited to planners, analysts, community engagement specialists, public information officers, bilingual employees, administrative staff, and those who have received training in the incident command system.

San Francisco will also activate volunteer organizations including but not limited to the San Francisco Fire Department's Neighborhood Emergency Response Team (NERT) and the San Francisco Police Department's Auxiliary Law Enforcement Emergency Response Team (ALERT) to increase the scope of San Francisco's outreach and education efforts.

### **PROTECTING MOST VULNERABLE**

People who are homeless in San Francisco are especially vulnerable because of older age and multiple chronic medical and mental health conditions. San Francisco is continuing to reach out to patients in the city's San Francisco Health Network with chronic disease or complex medical and behavioral health needs to ensure they have their medical needs met for the next 90 days in order to help people with high needs avoid the medical system except in cases of urgent need.

The City is working with health care providers to ensure that staff and residents are educated on prevention measures and are able to rapidly identify and isolate patients with the disease. Additionally, the City is conducting outreach to congregate living settings, which house priority populations, to educate them about the virus and how they can protect themselves.

### **BACKGROUND ON NOVEL CORONAVIRUS AND LOCAL EMERGENCY DECLARATION**

Last week, San Francisco declared a local emergency to boost preparedness for novel coronavirus (COVID-19).



The declaration of a local emergency is a legal document that mobilizes City resources, accelerates emergency planning, streamlines staffing, coordinates agencies across the city, allows for future reimbursement by the state and federal governments, and raises awareness about how everyone can prepare in the event that COVID-19 (novel coronavirus) appears in our community. Solano, Santa Clara, San Diego, Orange and Alameda counties have issued similar declarations to bolster their preparedness. The San Francisco declaration will be voted on by the Board of Supervisors on Tuesday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>.

San Francisco has been working diligently to prevent COVID-19, and to implement containment efforts for any San Franciscans who test positive for the new virus. The Department of Public Health activated its Departmental Operations Center on January 21, marshalling internal resources and leadership to focus on the clinical, epidemiological and community response. The Health Department has worked with local hospitals to identify isolation rooms, and health care clinics are screening patients for travel history and symptoms. The City opened its Emergency Operations Center on January 27, bringing the strength of the entire San Francisco response system to focus on this developing situation.

Globally, there have been more than 89,000 cases and more than 3,000 deaths since the disease first emerged in Wuhan, China in December 2019. While the majority of cases and deaths have taken place in China, the epicenter of the illness, the virus has now spread to about 60 countries, including the United States. As of 12:00 p.m. today, there are approximately 77 cases in this country, including 40 in California. While San Francisco has no confirmed cases in city residents, the City expects that to change and is preparing for community spread of the virus.

The federal government has worked to contain the virus by imposing strict travel restrictions for people returning from mainland China. As of February, foreign nationals who have traveled to China within the past 14 days are not permitted entry into the U.S., unless they are immediate family of U.S. citizens or permanent residents. All U.S. citizens returning from Hubei Province, China are subject to a mandatory 14-day quarantine by the federal government. U.S. citizens returning from other parts of mainland China who have symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath) are subject to a mandatory quarantine. Those returning from mainland China without symptoms are directed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to self-quarantine at home with monitoring by their local health department. In San Francisco, the Health Department is monitoring hundreds of returning travelers. Risk for the virus is based on travel history and contacts, not race, ethnicity, or culture.

COVID-19 cases or a local outbreak in San Francisco will require every sector of the city to play a role in ensuring the community's health. The emergency declaration provides a structure to support expanded efforts. For example, schools should be planning how they would manage potential closures, and businesses ought to look at their work-from-home policies and sick leave in order to support people who may need to self-quarantine.

###