Tuesday, March 24, 2020

COVID-19 Response Command Center

Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency

Situation Update

On March 10, 2020, Governor Charlie Baker declared a State of Emergency to support the Commonwealth's response to coronavirus. On March 14, the Baker-Polito Administration announced the creation of a new COVID-19 Response Command Center. Secretary Marylou Sudders is leading the cross-secretariat response to the outbreak.

The Command Center is the Commonwealth's single point of strategic decision making and coordination for the Administration's comprehensive COVID-19 response.

In support of the Command Center, the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) in Framingham has activated to Level 2 (Partial Activation). In addition, MEMA's Regional EOCs in Tewksbury, New Bedford, and Agawam have also been partially activated to support local communities. Agencies present at the SEOC today include:

Important protective measures to be aware of:

- All residents are advised to stay home and avoid unnecessary travel and other unnecessary activities. Residents over 70 years of age or with underlying health conditions, who are considered at high risk when exposed to COVID-19, should limit social interactions with other people as much as possible.
- All businesses and organizations not providing "COVID-19 Essential Services" have been ordered to close their physical workplaces and facilities to workers, customers, and the public **until noon on April 7th**. These businesses are encouraged to continue operations remotely.
- Gatherings of over 10 people are prohibited until noon on April 7th.
- On-premises consumption of food and drink at bars and restaurants is prohibited until noon on April 7th.
- Elementary and Secondary Schools are closed until April 6th.
- Colleges and universities, both public and private, are urged to reduce the need for students to be on campus.
- Some government offices are closed, you should check the website or call ahead, to confirm hours of operation.
- MBTA trains and buses are running a reduced service schedule.
- Public & Private daycare providers are closed. Exempt Emergency Child Care Programs have been established to provide priority access for families of emergency personnel, medical staff, and others critical to confronting COVID-19.
- Professional Licenses for individuals in good standing will be extended for 90-days after the end of the public health emergency.

See a list of all Public Health Orders & Guidance Issued During the State of Emergency

Situation in Numbers

Massachusetts current as of 3/24

1,159 Total Cases (click for more information)

11 Deaths (click to read today's news release)

13,749 patients tested to date by MA State Public Health Laboratory, hospitals and commercial laboratories. (+4,827 from 3/23)

United States current as of 3/24

Case numbers are updated regularly at noon Mondays through Fridays.

Total Cases Reported to CDC*:

**CDC updates national numbers Mon.-Fri. by 4pm. Includes Confirmed & Presumptive Positive*

44,183 Total Cases (+10,779)
479 Travel-Related (+30)
569 Close Contact (+30)
43,135 Under Investigation (+10,719)

544 Deaths (+144)

54 Jurisdictions Reporting Cases (50 states, D.C., Puerto Rico, Guam, and US V.I.)

Social Distancing Basics:

If you go out:

- ✓ Avoid crowds
- ✓ Stay 6 feet away from others
- ✓ Don't shake hands or hug
- ✓ Call/Facetime/online chat with friends and loved ones.

State Actions Today

At a noontime press conference, Governor Baker, Lt. Governor Polito, and Secretary Sudders provided a number of updates and announcements:

Department of Public Health Stay at Home Advisory:

- The emergency order requiring all non-essential businesses to close their physical workplaces and facilities to all workers, customers and the public went into effect today at noon.
- At the Governor's direction, the Department of Public Health today issued a stay at home advisory which outlined self-isolation and social distancing protocols.
- DPH strongly advises residents who are 70 years and older, and those with underlying health conditions, to stay-at-home except for essential trips for food, medicine, and focused time for exercise and fresh air.
- It also advises all residents to stay home as much as they can and avoid unnecessary activities for the next two weeks.
- The advisory urges residents to continue practicing social distancing and safe hygiene practices throughout their daily activities. (See the DPH Advisory)

Testing Progress:

- The Command Center is continuing to work aggressively to increase the Commonwealth's testing capacity across the state Public Health Lab and private labs.
- There have now been **13,749 tests** completed in Massachusetts, up from **6,004** on Sunday**. (129% increase.)**
- In addition to the State Public Health Laboratory and Quest Diagnostics and LabCorp, there are now 10 additional labs and testing numbers represented in today's numbers.

Additional Command Center Updates:

- As of this morning, the Department of Public Health has made 89 deliveries of Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) assets to healthcare facilities across the state.
- DPH received shipment from Strategic National Stockpile on 3/23 with over 750,000 masks, face shields, gowns and pairs of gloves received to date
- MEMA began distributing PPE on Monday to at least 15 local organizations, including fire, police and first responders.
- In response to a letter send by Secretary Sudders last Friday, the Massachusetts Dental Community has generously donated masks, hand sanitizer and gloves.
- MEMA Donations Management is working with the Dental Community to get these supplies to health care facilities throughout the commonwealth – so far MEMA received 43 responses from dentists
- Similar outreach for PPE donations has gone out to the construction and vocational school communities.
- Secretary Sudders, the Command Center Director, conducted a briefing call today with more than 100 State Legislators from throughout Massachusetts to update them on the Commonwealth's response to COVID-19.

50,000 + Sign Up For New COVID-19 Text Notification System

- The Baker-Polito Administration today announced the launch of a new text-based notification system to deliver important information about the Commonwealth's COVID-19 response to Massachusetts residents. More than 50,000 people have subscribed since the Governor made the announcement at noon.

- The new messaging tool called "AlertsMA" will allow residents to subscribe to real-time notifications by texting the keyword **COVIDMA** to **888-777**. After signing up, state and public health officials can send short messages and links to information directly to a resident's cell phone or other mobile device.
- The Commonwealth's Executive Office of Technology Services and Security partnered with Everbridge, a Mass-based company, whose platform powers AlertsMA, to bring the notification service online during the COVID-19 response.

Legislation Filed to Help Municipalities, School Districts:

- The Baker-Polito Administration has filed *An Act to Further Address Challenges Faced by Municipalities and School Districts Resulting from COVID-19,* which would provide administrative relief to state and local government entities impacted by the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak, including modifying local permitting processes, enabling municipalities to extend tax and finance deadlines, and extending deadlines for certain education requirements. (See Full Details Here)

Additional State Agency Updates Today:

Department of Transitional Assistance:

- DTA launched a new online application portal to assist residents in applying for Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) and Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled and Children (EAEDC)

Dept. of Early Education & Care: Emergency Childcare Centers Update:

- As of today, the Commonwealth had approved over **456 sites** to operate as Emergency Childcare Centers. Attendance reported today was **1,524** children, and tomorrow's expected attendance is more than **1,700** children.
- Since ramping up the Emergency Childcare Center plan, approximately 12-15 other state have reached out to EEC about how the department structured this innovative approach to sustaining emergency childcare. EEC is organizing a call with other states by Friday to share lessons learned and help others find a solution within their systems.
- For more visit the Department of Early Education & Care website

MassDOT:

- MassDOT issued a press release to announce new changes at the Registry of Motor Vehicles including suspension hearings now being conducted by telephone, appointment-only online reservations, and the temporary suspension of issuing REAL IDs.

Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs:

- The Baker-Polito Administration today announced further action to support ratepayers during the COVID-19 outbreak, directing the Department of Public Utilities (DPU) to issue an **Order** prohibiting investor-owned utility companies from shutting off gas, electric, and water utility service to any customers for failure to pay a bill or a portion of a bill until the State of Emergency is lifted or the DPU determines otherwise. (News Release)
- the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) has temporarily closed athletic fields and courts, such as basketball, tennis, handball, pickle ball, and bocce, throughout the state parks system effective today, March 24, 2020 until Tuesday, April 7, 2020, at which time the closure will be reassessed. Importantly, all state parks across the Commonwealth remain open and available for the public to visit.

DCR reminds residents and visitors to avoid gathering in groups of ten or more people, maintain social distancing, and practice healthy personal hygiene to stop the spread of the virus. (News Release)

American Red Cross Facing Severe Blood Shortage:
The American Red Cross is facing a severe blood shortage due to an unprecedented number of blood drive cancellations during the COVID-19 outbreak. There is an urgent blood donation need now for patients with chronic conditions and trauma, as well as for ensuring an adequate blood and blood product supply going forward. The Governor has deemed "Blood and plasma donors and the employees of the organizations that operate and manage related activities" as an essential service. Donating blood is safe and people should not hesitate to give. In addition, there is a need for community blood drive sites in the eastern part of the state.

To schedule a new blood drive: contact Bill Forsyth at (617) 699-3808 or email William.Forsyth@redcross.org.

Those who are healthy, feeling well, and eligible to give blood or platelets are urged to make an appointment by using the Red Cross Blood Donor App, visiting RedCrossBlood.org, or calling 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767).

Stay Informed

Key Public Health Messages for All Residents:

- Avoid unnecessary travel and other unnecessary activities.
- Protect yourself by following public health advice about keeping your hands clean and covering coughs and sneezes.
- Stay home if you are sick. If you need to consult a health care provider, call ahead first or use telehealth services.
- Protect others who are most at risk of COVID-19 by keeping your distance from people (at least 6 feet away from others), especially those who are older, and people living with chronic health conditions.
- If you are outside, avoid crowds.
- Don't shake hands or hug.
- Stay connected to friends and loved ones by phone or through other technology.
- Get information from trusted sources. Visit https://www.mass.gov/covid19 for the latest news, case counts, and lab testing results.
- Take care of your emotional health and help others do the same. If you need emotional support during these stressful times:
    - Call 2-1-1 and choose the "CALL2TALK" option.
    - Samaritans is continuing operations 24/7, as always. During this unprecedented time, it can feel overwhelming to receive constant messages about COVID-19. Call or text their 24/7 helpline any time at 877-870-4673.
    - The Disaster Distress Helpline, 1-800-985-5990, is a 24/7, 365-day-a-year, national hotline dedicated to providing immediate crisis counseling for people who are experiencing emotional distress related to any natural or human-caused disaster, including disease outbreaks like COVID-19. This toll-free, multilingual, and confidential crisis support service is available to all residents in the United States and its territories.

Communications Resources:

- New DPH Flyer/Infographic on reducing stress & coping with fear of COVID-19
- New DMH on maintaining Emotional Health & Well-Being
- New Social Distancing (youth and general) infographic released on website.

- Social Distancing messages are now on billboards and will soon be available on public transit. They are also now translated into multiple languages.
- There is a new video on Social Distancing specifically targeted specifically at youth.

COVID-2019 infographic for posting in all public places: https://www.mass.gov/doc/stop-the-spread-of-germs-respiratory-diseases-like-flu-and-covid-19/download

A short video for social media, waiting rooms, and other locations: https://youtu.be/HhUpkGxyjS4
Social media – follow and retweet DPH on Twitter @MassDPH, updated several times per day.
Get **text updates** about COVID-19 in Massachusetts sent to your phone by texting **COVIDMA** to **888-777**.
Massachusetts 2-1-1 - Massachusetts residents are urged to use 2-1-1 for information, resources, and referrals regarding COVID-19. Operators are staffing this hotline 24/7 and translators are available in multiple languages. Residents with questions can dial 2-1-1 from any landline or cellphone or use the live chat option on the Mass 2-1-1 website. As of today, Mass 2-1-1 has answered **17,454** calls from residents.