



Commonwealth of Virginia
Office of Governor Ralph S. Northam

March 2, 2020

Dear Fellow State Employee:

I am writing to let you know the Commonwealth is taking steps to be prepared in case the coronavirus COVID-19 appears in Virginia.

So far, that has not happened. In fact, the United States has seen less than 100 cases, and none in Virginia. We are ready if it does appear here. Here are five key things you need to know about Virginia's plan.

1. **We are taking a “whole of government” approach.** We established an Incident Management Team of public health and safety experts in January, within days after scientists first identified the virus in Asia. This team's job is to coordinate and plan Virginia's response. It includes representation across all of state government—from the Virginia Department of Health to the Department of Emergency Management and numerous other agencies—and a unified command structure guides its work. The team meets daily with government and private sector partners to share information, plan strategy, and communicate with the community. They are monitoring the virus on a worldwide basis, to understand where it has appeared and to learn from the experiences of local communities around the world.
2. **We are in regular consultation with federal officials.** The U.S. government has taken unprecedented steps with respect to travel, requiring travelers to be monitored for up to 14 days after leaving China. In Virginia so far, 279 travelers have been under public health monitoring. While none was found at “high risk” for exposure to COVID-19, our public health teams and Virginia's hospitals have protocols in place to secure medical treatments should someone test positive. In addition, the Commonwealth has secured rapid pulmonary chain reaction testing technology, so Virginia will no longer have to rely on testing by the federal government. This test delivers results within four hours.
3. **We are working closely with first responders, health care providers, hospitals, and local health districts.** This includes a comprehensive public information campaign, through the media, the internet, a 211 call center at 1-877-ASK-VDH3, and more. Plans

are in place to coordinate needed supplies equitably, including personal protective equipment. I have spoken with leaders in the General Assembly about the importance of having the necessary supplies in place, and we are united in providing the resources.

4. **We are fortunate that the Virginia Department of Health has some of the country's leading public health experts on its team.** They have deep experience guiding public health emergencies around the country, and I have great confidence in their professional expertise, both as Governor and as a physician.

5. **You can help.** While vaccines are being developed, public health professionals recommend taking “non-pharmaceutical” precautions to protect yourself and your loved ones. Here are some actions you can take:

- **Stay home if you feel sick.**

- § Avoid close contact with others and seek medical treatment if necessary.

- § If you have a fever, stay home until you are fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications.

- § Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

- [Wash your hands](#) with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.

- [Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze](#). Put your used tissue in a wastebasket. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve—not your hand.

- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.**

Our team will continue to closely monitor developments and take action as needed to protect Virginians. We will keep you informed as plans evolve and will discuss next steps at a public forum on Wednesday. I encourage you to learn more at the [Virginia Department of Health](#) and the federal [Centers for Disease Control](#).

Sincerely,

Ralph S. Northam

