



Panhandle Health District

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Public Health
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Panhandle Health District

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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First case of COVID-19 in North Idaho has been confirmed

The Panhandle Health District (PHD) and Kootenai Health have confirmed the first case of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in a male over 60 in Kootenai County. The individual has been contacted and advised to self-isolate. He is experiencing only mild symptoms. This is the first case in the Panhandle and the twelfth in the state.

This is the first confirmed case in the five northern counties of the Panhandle. There have been 10,442 cases and 150 deaths in the United States.

“Thanks to our early preparation and collaboration with Panhandle Health District, we made the decision early on to limit the locations collecting test samples,” said Karen Cabell, DO, chief physician executive at Kootenai Health. “We feel fortunate we had this safe testing option in our community so health care providers were protected and the patient got the needed testing and care.”

The patient’s treating physician ordered testing based on the patient’s clinical history. Clinical specimens were collected and sent to the Idaho Bureau of Laboratories, where laboratory testing confirmed the infection. Epidemiologists with PHD are working to investigate cases of possible contact. If other people are found to have been exposed, health officials will provide guidance to these individuals and monitor them closely for the development of symptoms.

Kootenai County EMS Chief Chris Way reminds residents “it is important to support each other and our susceptible population during this time. We ask that you still only call 911 for medical emergencies and utilize the Panhandle Health 1-877-415-5225 number for COVID-19 inquires. We continue to monitor the situation as mentioned above and are ready to respond.”

Additional case-specific information about this individual is confidential and will not be released.

“Our call center is available to take questions or concerns for our community,” said Lora Whalen, PHD Director. “I know that this is concerning. I encourage everyone to follow the President’s 15 Days to Slow the Spread guidelines. A link is included below.”

PHD will continue to monitor the situation closely and are working with the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, city leaders, schools, emergency management, healthcare providers, and our community at large to help prevent the spread of this virus.

People ill with this coronavirus in other states and countries have reported mild to severe respiratory illness with fever, cough, and difficulty breathing. If community members have these symptoms and they become severe, they should call PHD’s call center at 1-877-415-5225 or their provider. PHD will provide an over-the-phone assessment to determine if someone should be tested. Please call, do not come into PHD or your provider’s office.

Right now, CDC recommends travelers avoid all nonessential travel to China, Iran, Europe, United Kingdom, Ireland, Malaysia, South Korea, and Japan. In addition, CDC recommends people traveling practice certain health precautions like avoiding contact with people who are sick (social distancing) and practicing good hand hygiene.

Learn more:

- Idaho-specific information about the novel coronavirus: www.coronavirus.idaho.gov/
- Panhandle specific information: www.panhandlehealthdistrict.org/covid-19/
- President’s 15 Days to Slow the Spread Guidance: https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/03.16.20_coronavirus-guidance_8.5x11_315PM.pdf

Panhandle Health District provides over 40 different public health programs to families, individuals and organizations in northern Idaho. From food and drinking water safety to health education and disease control, public health services are critical to ensure our community is a safe and healthy place to live, work and play.

The PHD team is made up of nurses, nutritionists, environmental health specialists, health educators and many other dedicated professionals with a common goal to deliver vital public health services.

Panhandle Health District is one of seven health districts in the state of Idaho.

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