

Date of Meeting: March 11, 2020

# I-1

**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
SPECIAL BUSINESS MEETING  
INFORMATION ITEM**

**SUBJECT:** COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Briefing

**ELECTION DISTRICT(S):** Countywide

**CRITICAL ACTION DATE:** At the pleasure of the Board

**STAFF CONTACT(S):** John Sandy, County Administration  
David Goodfriend, Health Department  
Kevin Johnson, Office of Emergency Management

**PURPOSE:** To brief the Board of Supervisors on the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and the actions being taken in Loudoun County to mitigate the infection's impact.

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**BACKGROUND:** Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that affect people and a variety of animals. In people, coronaviruses include the common cold and such novel infections in recent years as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV) and Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV). These viruses are transmitted through the air by: coughing and sneezing; close personal contact, like touching or shaking hands; and, by touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes before washing your hands.

On December 31, 2019, China notified the World Health Organization (WHO) of a cluster of pneumonia cases in Wuhan, the capital of Central China's Hubei province. On January 7, 2020, the novel coronavirus was identified as the cause of the outbreak and, by January 13, the first case outside China was confirmed. On January 17, screening began at international airports in the United States and on January 21 the first case of COVID-19 in the United States was identified.

Containment

The goal of containment is to prevent the spread of infection to other countries or other communities. As part of the screening process at international airports in the United States, beginning in January 2020 U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) began placing screened travelers into categories of risk for exposure to COVID-19 ([www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/risk-assessment.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/risk-assessment.html)). That information was then provided to jurisdictions where the travelers were staying so that local health department staff could provide appropriate follow-up, such as through voluntary quarantine or isolation agreements.

### Mitigation

The goal of mitigation is to lessen the impact of an infection on a community. As cases of COVID-19 continued to rise in countries outside China, along with evidence on ongoing person-to-person transmission in those countries, public health moved to add mitigation strategies to its ongoing containment actions of monitoring travelers at risk for infection. Key mitigation strategies may include: personal protection measures, such as frequent handwashing, staying home when sick, and covering one's cough; social distancing measures, which are aimed at addressing mass gatherings; environmental measures, such as cleaning of high contact surfaces; and, when available, vaccinations and medications. Community education is critical to this and Loudoun County's Public Affairs Office has been taking the lead in website, social media and other outreach efforts.

**ISSUES:** By virtue of its location in northern Virginia and home to Washington Dulles International Airport, Loudoun County has prepared for the possibility of a pandemic impacting our community. This has been demonstrated through successful past efforts addressing SARS, H1N1 and Ebola. Through these responses and through ongoing exercises, the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) has developed and strengthened coordination with key county departments and agencies, the Loudoun County Public School (LCPS) system, our local hospitals and healthcare providers, our business communities, and other key sectors of our community. That said, each event is unique and much is as yet unknown about the impact COVID-19 may have in Loudoun County.

### Impact on Loudoun County Residents and Businesses

As of March 5, 2020, there have been no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Virginia or the National Capital Region. At this time, it is not clear whether, and to what extent, COVID-19 may impact Loudoun County residents. It is known that in other countries, about 1%-2% of people diagnosed with COVID-19 die from their infection, mainly impacting elderly patients and those who are otherwise medically fragile. Loudoun County has been working on getting the word out to all those who work, live or visit Loudoun County on steps they can take to protect themselves from infection. As this process continues, there will be a focus on those more likely to be severely impacted if infected and harder to reach populations.

### Impact on Access to Healthcare and First Response Operations

While Loudoun is fortunate to have two vibrant hospital systems, a pandemic places significant demands on both outpatient and emergency department services as the number of residents who choose to seek care increases significantly. The Health Department has been in regular communication with the Loudoun medical community on best practices for caring appropriately for their patients and on options for surge capacity if needed. The Health Department through the OEM has been in regular communication with first response agencies including the Loudoun County Combined Fire and Rescue System and the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office with regard to potential impacts.

Impact on Continuity of Operations

In any pandemic, there is a likelihood of increased absenteeism due to illness, childcare issues, and other factors, potentially impacting the service delivery of government and private businesses. Loudoun County government continues to work with its departments and employees on updated continuity of operations plans (COOP) and personal emergency plans to maintain essential services. Similar information is being provided to our county's business and non-profit entities.

Impact on Schools and Other Public Gatherings

The Loudoun County government and LCPS have been working closely on how best to safely maintain education services should an outbreak occur in Loudoun County and how to identify when school dismissals or closures are warranted. Similar information will be provided to our private schools and pre-schools. Triggers are also being identified for other locations when social distancing measures are warranted.