



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 10, 2020
TO: Board of Supervisors
THROUGH: Tim Hemstreet, County Administrator
FROM: Dr. David Goodfriend, Director, Health Department
RE: Public Coronavirus Briefing, Question Packet 1

This packet contains staff responses to questions provided by the members of the Board of Supervisors regarding the topic of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

Part 1

1. Based on what we're seeing around the world and in the impacted states in this country, do you recommend the County declare a state of emergency? At what point? (Umstattd)

State code requires that a local declaration of emergency is made by the County Administrator who serves as Loudoun County's Emergency Management Director and is the direct appointee of the local governing body. This decision is typically only made after appropriate briefing with Board leadership. It is then affirmed by the Board of Supervisors at their next business meeting.

A declaration is dependent upon a number of variables, circumstances and events which would be closely vetted by the County Administrator upon recommendation of a number of those who are deeply involved in the county's emergency response. There is no such decision at this time and for the reasons articulated above, it is difficult to predict when it would occur, or not.

2. In order to keep the boards and councils of town, and county governments operating, do you anticipate the need for emergency legislation from Richmond to loosen the existing restrictions on elected officials participating remotely in meetings? (Umstattd)

The Board of Supervisors' [Adopted Rules of Order](#) (Section XIX) provides for remote participation in Board meetings as permitted by the Code of Virginia § 2.2-3708.2. Any individual member may participate from a remote location only if a quorum (5 members) of the Board is physically assembled at the primary or central meeting location, and the Board has made arrangements for the voice of the remote participant to be heard by all persons at the primary or central meeting location. The Rules of Order and law provide other stipulations regarding remote participation, including notice requirements, minute recordation, and limitations on frequency.

Further, the Code of Virginia §2.2-3708.2(A)(3) authorizes a public body to meet by electronic communication without a quorum being physically assembled when the Governor has declared a state of emergency (in accordance with § 44-146.17) provided that the declared emergency makes it impracticable or unsafe to assemble a quorum in a single location and the purpose of the meeting is to address the emergency.

3. What is your public communication plan going forward? How frequently do you plan to brief the public? Will you rely on the County's public information office or will you be handling all press releases? (Umstattd)

The Public Affairs and Communications office is supporting the Health Department with incident communications, as well as County Administration with internal communications. Loudoun County's communications will remain flexible to be responsive to the current situation. At the direction of Loudoun County leadership and the Health Director, specific messages for the public related to COVID-19 will be published. In addition, the Public Affairs and Communications office will publish routine reminder messages regarding preparedness and response on an ongoing basis.

Communications involving our regional partners will be coordinated with the appropriate jurisdictions, which is our standard practice.

In January, the county established a webpage with information on COVID-19, which is loudoun.gov/coronavirus. This web page contains general information about COVID-19, actions being taken by Loudoun County, and well as links to the most up-to-date information and guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Additionally, the county established an email and text subscription service so that the public may choose to receive the county's updates directly to their email or smart phone. These updates will include Loudoun County Government-specific updates and not necessary include information about COVID-19 in other countries, for example, that is better provided by the CDC. The current plan is to publish at least weekly updates, and additional updates as warranted. Residents are encouraged to subscribe to these updates.

Loudoun County is actively working with the local Health Department and others in providing public information and outreach efforts using credible sources of information to stakeholders (residents and businesses) and targeted populations who may be most impacted by COVID-19. This may include written information, online information, e.g., social media, and face-to-face discussions/presentations. Members of the public who are interested in COVID-19 information should proactively seek out information online from credible sources.

- 4. Info so far from LC Dept of Health provides everything but "Situation Updates". - we cannot wait till the March 11 meeting to get updated....so: PLEASE ask Dept. of Health to provide DAILY CORONAVIRUS UPDATES - this is being done by many countries and serves not only to give new info, but to develop better resident preventative habits and reduce panic / anxiety. (Buffington)**

Loudoun County will be providing updates at least weekly regarding the county's ongoing response to COVID-19, and at any time in between if warranted, in compliance with HIPPA¹. To subscribe to these updates, please visit loudoun.gov/coronavirus. Daily updates on the outbreak are available from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at cdc.gov/coronavirus.

In addition, concerned residents are encouraged to contact the Health Department at any time by email at health@loudoun.gov with any questions or concerns.

- 5. What will be the primary method of communication to Loudoun County residents leading up to and in the event of an urgent Coronavirus situation? Who can we expect this communication from? (Randall)**

Loudoun County residents should expect to receive information from Loudoun County Government through the same channels that the county routinely uses, which includes our website; email and text subscription services, e.g., Alert Loudoun; social media; and Board of Supervisors e-newsletters.

The county's messages will be driven by the current situation and the direction of the county leadership and Health Director. The county will publish information within its purview. Information about COVID-19 in other jurisdictions will be published by the appropriate jurisdiction.

¹ [HIPAA – Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act \(1996\)](#)

6. What disinfection schedule are you recommending for County and Town facilities? Given the experience of some stores on the west coast, are we apt to face shortages of disinfectant? (Umstattd)

The CDC states that based on what is currently known about the virus, spread from person-to-person happens most frequently among close contacts (within about 6 feet). This type of transmission occurs via respiratory droplets. [According to the CDC](#), "It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads." Transmission of coronavirus in general occurs much more commonly through respiratory droplets than through fomites (objects or materials that are likely to carry infection, such as clothes, utensils, and furniture.) Cleaning of visibly dirty surfaces and frequently touched surfaces followed by disinfection is a best practice measure for prevention of COVID-19 and other viral respiratory illnesses in community settings. [The CDC further states](#), "No additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is recommended at this time." Loudoun County's Department of General Services (DGS) provides standard housekeeping services for departments, which includes keeping soap and hand sanitizer available at designated stations in county facilities. The county continues to maintain its routine cleaning practices.

In addition, the county recommends that all employees and visitors to county facilities practice good personal hygiene, including:

- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available. Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick (i.e. social distancing).
- Stay home when sick.
- Cover cough or sneeze with a tissue then discard tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

7. Have you estimated how much the County should be prepared to spend to accomplish this, if necessary? (Umstattd)

Loudoun County is operating under the [Pandemic Response Plan](#), which is an adjunct to the county's Emergency Operations Plan. The Pandemic Response Plan, specifically provides the local health department, county government departments, the school system, the airport, our hospitals and healthcare providers, and other entities either direct or implied roles to best identify and prevent the spread of disease in our community. Loudoun County's Emergency Operations Plan then provides the paradigm for any county government approach, response and recovery for all-hazards including health emergencies such as COVID-19. These Plans work collaboratively together and many of the resources that are deployed are derived from the county's general fund and those of other separate entities involved (e.g., LCPS, local hospitals, airports, utilities and municipalities).

8. Do you recommend the County set aside millions of dollars for emergency preparedness during this budget cycle? (Umstattd)

No, not at this time. It is the County Administrator, who also serves as Loudoun County's Emergency Management Director, who would have to make this recommendation to the Board of Supervisors, if ever warranted.

9. What steps are we taking to ensure our first responders, especially our ambulance crews, do not contract the virus from patients they're transporting? (Umstattd)

Loudoun County first responders are following the [CDC guidance for first responders](#), including emergency medical services and public safety personnel.

10. Would you implement a quarantine for individuals with confirmed cases of the virus? How would you accomplish that, as in, what steps would you take and what steps would you expect law enforcement to take, if any, to enforce a quarantine? Under quarantine conditions, how do you recommend quarantined families get food and other essentials? The rule of thumb seems to be that people are quarantined for two weeks or until they test negative three times for the virus. However, some who have tested negative at one point, test positive again days or weeks later. Do you think quarantines are going to be effective in the long run? (Umstattd)

Quarantine of well persons and isolation of ill persons is a critical component of disease containment strategies. For over a month, the CDC has been identifying travelers at risk for COVID-19 and has been providing that information to public health departments for voluntary monitoring, quarantine and isolation. Under these conditions, there have been specific mechanisms put in place to ensure that those under monitoring are able to receive needed goods and services safely. While the recommendation to stay home when sick will remain critical guidance, whether similar formal isolation and quarantine agreements would be recommended in the event of a confirmed case not associated with travel would depend on whether these actions would continue to help protect the public or whether by that time the disease was already widespread.

11. Given that medical authorities in the Seattle area have concluded that the virus may have been spreading through the community for about six weeks before it was identified, do you anticipate we may already have unidentified mild cases of corona virus in Loudoun County? (Umstattd)

The Health Department tracks respiratory diseases, such as the flu or COVID-19, in our community through two main approaches: 1.) test results of individuals and; 2.) surveillance for increases in disease in our community, such as in the emergency departments, school absenteeism or use of over the counter cold medications. As many COVID-19 cases did not meet the initial testing criteria of requiring hospitalization, it is likely that there could have been mild cases in our community without our knowing. That said, we have not seen the increases in school absenteeism and use of cold medications we would expect to see if there were significant numbers of unreported cases. Anecdotally, there are increases in emergency department visits, but this is likely a result of increased concern amongst our residents and some initial hesitance by private providers to evaluate these individuals.

- 12. As of Saturday, February 29th, the Leesburg Lowe's had sold out of face masks, due to the public's concerns about the virus. This has resulted in a shortage of masks for those whose jobs require them - e.g., those in the building trades. Doctors around the U.S. are advising the public not to rely on these masks for protection against the virus. Yet these doctors are also saying these masks can be useful in preventing the spread of the virus if worn by those who are already sick. What is your advice on the effectiveness of different kinds of masks for these two purposes - avoiding catching the virus and avoiding transmitting the virus? (Umstatted)**

A consistent part of Loudoun County government's message to the public is that having well people wear masks and gloves is not effective for preventing infection and may actually increase the risk of transmission due to reduction in proven nonpharmaceutical interventions, such as frequent hand washing and use of hand sanitizer, covering one's cough and staying home when sick. Use of masks by ill patients does help prevent the risk of disease transmission for when the ill person cannot stay home or keep a safe distance from others. Additionally, properly fitted N95 respirators are very effective for health care providers to use when in contact with ill patients. Details on [prevention and treatment are also provided by the CDC](#).

- 13. The Chinese CDC has published a report on the different mortality rates facing those who contract the virus, based on their age group and gender. According to The Hill, which reported on the study, the group most at risk were men in their 80s, with a mortality rate of almost 15%, and those with underlying medical conditions. The mortality rate decreased substantially as the patients got younger. Is the Chinese study credible, in your opinion? (Umstatted)**

There is credible information provided by the CDC and other official sources that COVID-19 tends to strike those with underlying medical concerns and elderly more severely than younger and healthier individuals. This is similar to the seasonal influenza, where our seniors and medically fragile are more likely to be severely impacted, but that there are occasional deaths in children and otherwise healthy individuals.

- 14. I heard the CDC suggest that seniors (I am 68) refill their prescriptions as a precaution. I followed that advice and the prescriptions were denied by my insurance (United Health Care as a supplement to Medicare) because it wasn't time for a refill. If I had wanted to pay one prescription that costs \$20 in plan was \$500. I called United Health Care to discuss. After some research, the answer was that only Washington State has that Policy. Virginia was not included. I thought we were being preventative in our preparation. Having the prescriptions refilled early was never giving me more medication just giving it a little earlier. Thought I should share. (Randall)**

Per [CDC recommendations](#), if you are unable to obtain extra necessary medications, consider mail-order for those medications.

15. Would you recommend advising the public against attending any public events, such as sporting events or high school graduations or political rallies or even public hearings before the County Board and Town Councils? At what point might you make such a recommendation? Before or after we have a confirmed case in Loudoun County or the region? (Umstattd)

At this time, the local Health Department and the Virginia Department of Health are not recommending any change in participation in normal activities for healthy people, but to be mindful of how they can best keep themselves healthy through frequent handwashing, use of hand sanitizer, and keeping at least 6 feet away from anyone who appears ill. As always, the Health Department recommends that ill people stay home to prevent spreading whatever infection they may have. In the event that social distancing is potentially warranted, the Health Department would work closely with the impacted entities on the expected benefits and downsides of each action on the population of concern.

16. How should testing be done if a person believes that they have been exposed or are experiencing symptoms? Should they go to their doctor or hospital, or can they call the health department and arrange for testing? (Randall)

Any individual should contact their healthcare provider immediately if he/she develops symptoms of the coronavirus (COVID-19), has been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19, or has recently traveled from an area with widespread or ongoing community spread of COVID-19. Now that private laboratories are providing this testing, their healthcare provider can obtain and submit samples for COVID-19 testing directly, without needing approval by the Health Department. If the individual does not have access to a healthcare provider, the Health Department can help facilitate their being tested.

17. Large companies such as Amazon and Google have already implemented travel restrictions for their employees. Have you reached out to the Loudoun Chamber of Commerce to suggest their member businesses limit employee travel? (Umstattd)

The [CDC has issued travel guidance](#) that all businesses should follow.

Currently, the CDC states there is a risk of community spread of COVID-19 in the continental United States. Travelers in the U.S. should:

- Avoid contact with sick people.
- Clean your hands often by washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with 60%–95% alcohol.
- Pay attention to your health for 14 days after returning home and seek medical advice if you get sick with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing.
- Avoid travelling if you are sick.

Loudoun County has specific [guidance for businesses](#) that has been shared through the Loudoun County Chamber of Commerce to all their members. The Chamber provided a [coronavirus update](#) to its members along with the guidance document.

18. What is the current level of preparation in the County's retirement communities, nursing homes and senior centers? (Umstattd)

Many infections, including the seasonal flu, disproportionately impact Loudoun's senior citizens if they spread widely in our community. As a result, the local Health Department works closely with our residential facilities each year on ways they can best keep their residents safe. The local Health Department believes that COVID-19 will similarly disproportionately impact our seniors and Loudoun County is prioritizing outreach to nonresidential locations, such as retirement communities and senior centers.

Only licensed facilities (assisted living, nursing, etc.) are required to have emergency plans. Retirement communities are not required to have an emergency plan. Instead, departments provide outreach and education information to residents upon request.

The senior centers are the responsibility of the county and they are prepared and a part of any contingency as envisioned by Loudoun County's Emergency Operations Plan.

19. Does the County have a plan for closing its senior centers? When would you recommend implementing that plan? Do we wait until we've identified the first case in the County or in a senior center? If we close the senior centers, do we need to provide in-home meals to any seniors who relied on the centers for their lunches? (Umstattd)

Social distancing, such as closing facilities, postponing mass gatherings and teleworking, is a key potential part of the nonpharmaceutical intervention options available to help keep our residents safe. Specific triggers for doing so depends on the expected benefits and downsides of each action on the population of concern.

The Health Department would provide recommendations on social distancing, include facility closures, in accordance with the most up to date recommendations from the CDC. Additionally, depending on the situation, Loudoun County may recommend that older adults consider staying home rather than coming to a senior center or other gathering place. [More information is available from the CDC for people at risk](#) for serious illness from COVID-19, including older adults.

20. LAX has instituted a more frequent disinfection schedule of once an hour. What is Dulles International Airport doing? What is Leesburg Executive Airport doing? (Umstattd)

Leesburg Executive Airport is cleaned on a daily schedule. The airport offers plane-side service, where arriving and departing passengers can go from plane to car directly, without needing to visit the public terminal. The airport has also just completed an upgrade to the terminal public restrooms to include completely touchless flush, faucets, and antibacterial soap dispensers.

Loudoun County has reached out to Dulles International Airport to request details on their disinfection schedule.

21. What procedures are already being taken in schools, hospitals, libraries and other public buildings to ensure cleanliness and disinfecting to lower the spread? (Randall)

Per the [Loudoun County Public Schools \(LCPS\) website](#), LCPS maintenance personnel clean schools and facilities nightly, with special focus on “high touch” surfaces such as doors, door knobs, push plates on doors, and desks, to maintain a clean, safe environment. In addition, if a particular class or school suffers higher-than-average absenteeism due to illness, LCPS’ maintenance teams are prepared to disinfect large indoor areas, as part of our effort to safeguard students.

The CDC has recommended the following for schools: “Perform routine environmental cleaning. Routinely clean frequently touched surfaces (e.g., doorknobs, light switches, countertops) with cleaners that you typically use. Use all cleaning products according to the directions on the label. Provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces (e.g., keyboards, desks, remote controls) can be wiped down by students and staff before each use.”

Loudoun County Public Libraries sanitize frequently used surfaces and objects regularly, including public computer keyboards. On March 4, 2020, Director Chang Liu reported that cleaning supplies and hand sanitizer were being delivered to all locations. Moreover, Director Liu indicated that all Library locations would begin using the wipes to sanitize all computer keyboards, mice, touchscreens (AWEs, and Children’s PACs), self-checkout machines, doorknobs, table tops, and any other frequently touched surface. In addition, hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes would be made available to all staff and the public and CDC posters would be displayed in all locations.

In addition, Library Services make hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes available to the public while supplies last. Additionally, and as always, they encourage all customers to practice simple habits to prevent the spread of germs, such as staying home if sick, washing hands frequently, and covering coughs and sneezes per the guidelines issued by the CDC and the local Health department.

See question #23 for discussion on procedures in hospitals.

See question #6 for discussion on general procedures in county facilities.

22. We read in the news that the US has had a shortage of test kits for this virus. Do our hospitals have sufficient supplies to handle an epidemic? Test kits? Ventilators? Beds? Respiratory masks? (Umstattd)

See question #23 for discussion on supplies in hospitals.

23. In preparation for past epidemics, and in order to avoid contaminating hospitals, jurisdictions in our region have anticipated setting up medical tents or trailers in close proximity to hospitals. Have you reached out to Inova Loudoun and Stone Springs hospitals to ascertain whether they could accommodate such ancillary treatment facilities? (Umstattd)

Loudoun County Health Department is working closely with StoneSprings and Inova Loudoun Hospital on preparations for addressing surges in demand for emergency department services, including sufficient supplies. This builds on work done with Inova Loudoun Hospital around the H1N1 pandemic. The county

is fortunate that both hospitals are part of systems in Northern Virginia that have active teams working on how best to keep their hospitals safe and effective in addressing their communities' needs.

Additional [guidance for healthcare facilities](#) is provided by the CDC.

24. Are Loudoun hospitals, clinics, nursing homes and other healthcare providers getting the tests and other medical supplies they need? I understand that delivery has been slow, so how can the county government facilitate and expedite the delivery of those supplies? (Randall)

As noted in the question #23, the Loudoun County Health Department is working closely with local healthcare providers on preparations for addressing surges in demand. Regarding testing, COVID-19 testing is currently being done by the Commonwealth of Virginia and by the private laboratories LabCorp and Quest. Doctors and healthcare providers do not conduct the testing themselves. Doctors and healthcare providers take swabs and submit swabs to labs for testing. While there is expected to be a short learning curve for our private healthcare providers to learn how to effectively utilize the private laboratory resource, there is currently no backlog noted in their ability to do so.

25. What outreach have you done to LCPS? What disinfection schedule are the schools ready to implement? (Umstatted)

Loudoun County government has a long history of coordination with LCPS on infectious disease issues such as pertussis and chickenpox, and with previous H1N1 and Ebola concerns. Weekly senior level meetings have been occurring between LCPS and the county government specifically for COVID-19.

See question #21 for discussion on the LCPS disinfection schedule.

26. Do you anticipate the need to close any schools? Would you recommend waiting until a case has been identified within a school? (Umstatted)

School closures are one potential means of social distancing (and are included in Loudoun County's [Pandemic Response Plan](#) as one action that is appropriate under certain circumstances). The Health Department is working closely with the public school system on considerations for school closures and dismissals. A decision to close would not necessarily depend on a confirmed case within the schools; conversely, closure may not be beneficial if a case in the schools is confirmed.

In a March 8, 2020, message to parents, Superintendent Dr. Eric Williams stated, "LCPS also is reviewing our operations and response plans, consulting closely with the Loudoun County Department of Health and accessing the latest available information from the Virginia Department of Health and federal health authorities. We plan to make decisions regarding changes to school operations, including any potential closure of schools, in conjunction with health authorities in order to protect the health and well-being of our students, staff, their families and the community. In case LCPS must close schools for an extended period of time, staff is developing contingency plans that involve online learning and other off-site learning experiences."

For ongoing information and actions being taken by LCPS, please visit their [website](#).

27. What is the tipping point in which they would shut down the county schools if we get infections nearby, and how would children be screened for non contagious before being allowed back into school (for say, working parents that send their kids back to school sick as a daycare so they can go to work)? (Randall)

Loudoun County's [Pandemic Response Plan](#) includes school closures as one action that is appropriate under certain circumstances. It is difficult to predict an exact trigger in this instance; however, the Health Department and LCPS are working closely on this issue.

See question #26 for more discussion on school closures.

Loudoun County Public Schools have reinforced the importance of students and staff staying home when sick. As COVID-19 can be spread prior to the display of symptoms, there is no way to assure that students or staff are not contagious.

For ongoing information and actions being taken by LCPS, please visit their [website](#).

28. Do you anticipate that widespread illnesses could impact utility plant operators and trash collection companies? Have you reached out to Loudoun Water and the towns' utility departments and to the trash collection companies to see what their preparedness levels are? (Umstattd)

The coronavirus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person and no single person or group of persons is immune. As always, the Health Department recommends that ill people stay home to prevent spreading whatever infection they may have. In the event that social distancing is potentially warranted, the Health Department would work closely with the impacted entities on the expected benefits and downsides of each action on the population of concern. Utilities and other service providers should review their continuity of operations plans accordingly.

The Loudoun County Office of Emergency Management has been in touch with Loudoun Water and confirmed that the utility does have continuity of operations plans in place, including plans for a reduction in workforce if necessary.