



COUNTY OF DEL NORTE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
PUBLIC HEALTH BRANCH

400 L Street
Crescent City, California 95531

Phone
(707) 464-0861

Heather Snow, Director
Warren Rehwaldt, M.D., Public Health Officer

Fax
(707) 465-6701

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SUBJECT: To Del Norte Residents;

There are lots of new items to report about coronavirus this week. I just want to start with the follow-up of the news last week. We had our first and second cases of confirmed coronavirus in our county over the weekend. Probably you all have heard this already. We are still investigating both cases, but so far there is no known source.

I would like to point out for those out there who might still be doubtful about this pandemic, to pay attention to what has happened in New York City. There is no question about events there- an uncontrolled outbreak with near-disastrous consequences. If anyone is doubting the usefulness of the shelter in place order here, I want to share just a little bit of data. As of April 3rd, the total number of cases in New York State was at nearly 103,000. For the same period, California had about 12,000. New York has far more cases than California, even though we have twice the population. One of the ways we look at how disease acts in our communities is to calculate "per 100,000"-a way to sort of level the playing field when different groups of people have widely different population totals. We do a little math and come up with a number that shows how many persons are likely to show up with a disease in a group of 100,000 people. It's an easier way to see the difference between total numbers like we see in this instance. For COVID-19, through last week, New York had a "per 100,000" score of 529 cases. The same score for California was 30 cases. The difference in those numbers is social distancing, and shelter in place rules put in place **in time**, with respect to the separate communities, even though those shelter in place rules were declared only a day apart (for California, March 19th, for New York, March 20th). We got lucky here in California, and even though the Bay Area and LA hospitals are stressed right now to be able to manage the cases of the disease in their communities, it is not nearly as serious as the situation in New York.

I can't stress it enough-the only tool we have to hold this virus in check is to keep doing what we are doing, staying home, thinking of ourselves and everyone around us as being sick and keeping our distance. Now that we have cases in our own community, the importance of this is greater than ever. I am very aware of the fact that people **are** doing these crazy-sounding things in Del Norte, and I am grateful that they have listened and paid attention. I am also aware that there are some skeptics out there, but this is no time for skepticism. The coronavirus outbreak has the makings of being the worst pandemic in the last several centuries. There is no question about it-when the White House mentions the potential of over 2 million deaths nationwide if things had gone on unchecked, they are not exaggerating.

It has been described as a war, and we really are in a war footing, with the sudden changes that go with it. I think that the analogy to Pearl Harbor is best-not much warning, and almost overnight, everything changes. Up until now, this pandemic seems to have been happening mostly in other places, but it is now here as well. It could stay this way for a long time, with a few cases showing up, and people staying home with respiratory symptoms as the virus slowly crawls through the community; and that is exactly what we want to happen. Whether that continues to happen or not is in the hands of all the people in this county.

I am sorry to report that we still have no change in testing capacity, the new tests that we have been hearing about on the news are being used in the hotspots around the country. And that is perfectly understandable, you need to send the valuable resources where the need is the greatest. We will get our turn, most likely, and the ability to get tests should slowly improve. We are still using a narrow test strategy, reserving tests for people who need to be identified because of their clinical situation, or in a few cases, because of their occupation or where they live. I will say it again; most people do not need to know if they have the virus, they just need to assume that if they are sick with respiratory symptoms, they should conclude that they have the virus and isolate themselves-stay home when you're sick. And not just respiratory symptoms-there are a whole range of symptoms that people are reporting, such as sudden loss of taste or smell, headache, and gastrointestinal symptoms such as diarrhea. Now that we know the virus is here, people need to be mindful of what to look for if it reaches them.

Lastly, we have heard today that Curry County now has several confirmed cases as well. We have heard from some Curry residents in Brookings, complaining of California residents crossing the border and doing their shopping and fueling up there. I know that there is still going to be cross border traffic by essential workers who live over the border, but if people are traveling there just to shop, thinking that it is a safe haven, they should probably rethink their plan. I would like to discourage unnecessary travel out of the county-people are safer at home, period. Stay home, stay safe, stay healthy! And keep in mind, always-outbreaks have beginnings and endings. This will be over someday.

Dr. Warren Rehwaldt
Del Norte County Public Health Officer
Dept. of Health and Human Services
Public Health Branch
707-464-0861