

March 3, 2020

All State Employees:

As you have undoubtedly seen in media reports, there have been confirmed cases of COVID-19, commonly called coronavirus, in several states, with six deaths in the United States thus far. I wanted to take a moment to update state employees on the situation in Louisiana and on the steps you can take to prevent the spread of illness.

Though we do **not** currently have a confirmed case of COVID-19 in Louisiana, it is important to be prepared, which is what we have been doing since the outbreak in mainland China. Already in Louisiana, the Department of Health has been communicating on a very regular basis with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at the federal level as well as health providers, hospitals and doctors to proactively share information about symptoms and also guidance about when someone needs to be tested. We have the capability to test for coronavirus at the Office of Public Health's State Laboratory, and we will be transparent with the public if we have a confirmed case in Louisiana, which we currently do not.

The same actions you take to prevent the spread of flu are also helpful in preventing any respiratory illness, including COVID-19: cover your cough, wash your hands often and well, and stay home when you're sick.

If you have traveled to China, South Korea, Iran, Italy or Japan within the previous 14 days and experience fever, cough or another kind of illness, contact your health care provider as soon as possible and tell them your symptoms and about your recent travel.

In addition, it is still flu season and your chances of getting the flu are higher than of getting coronavirus. It is still a good idea to get a flu shot if you have not already done so or to take a flu antiviral if it is prescribed.

Yesterday, we held the first Unified Command Group meeting about coronavirus to ensure our state agencies are coordinating and communicating effectively across all departments about this illness. In addition, we have created a COVID-19 Task Force to lead Louisiana's planning for different scenarios relating to the spread of coronavirus. It will offer guidance to state agencies, local governments, businesses and organizations.

As an initial step, the COVID-19 Task Force is recommending that all state agencies review and update their Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP) that were developed statewide in 2012 under GOHSEP's direction to take coronavirus into account.

For updates on the state's response to the coronavirus situation, visit the [Louisiana Department of Health website](#).

Thank you for all of your hard work on behalf of the people of Louisiana. Together, we will work to keep the people of Louisiana healthy and to prevent the spread of illness in our state.

Sincerely,

Governor John Bel Edwards