



March 25, 2020

BULLETIN from CUBA FIRE RESCUE:

Here is an extremely important message from Rick Romero, our Fire Chief at the Cuba Fire Rescue. **Please study it carefully.**

Dear Friends and Neighbors –

Your volunteer fire department has been preparing for the coronavirus and receiving official updates from state and county emergency officials.

I want to provide you with a summary of the information we have received. I will update this information when and if I receive significant new information. Please rely on this sort of advice from official sources. A great deal of misinformation is circulating on social media. If you think that neighbors may not have access to this message, please print a copy and give it to them.

What is coronavirus and why is it so dangerous?

Coronavirus is a new form of virus that is highly contagious. It can lead to death for some infected persons. We have no medications to treat it. We have no vaccine that will prevent us from catching it. Persons who get the virus recover through the natural defenses of their own immune systems, which generates antibodies to fight any foreign body that it detects in our bodies.

Most persons who become infected by the virus recover from it. But there have been many deaths from it around the world and in this country. We know that deaths have been disproportionately high for elderly persons with existing medical issues. Men are more likely to die of it than women. But new evidence is showing that younger persons are also experiencing extreme respiratory distress leading to hospitalization and, sometimes, to death. No one is immune; no one is safe from this virus.

The danger is increased by the extent of our ignorance about the virus, the way it is spread, and how it affects our bodies. In particular, because of the lack of testing supplies, we do not know the extent to which persons may have the virus without knowing that they are infected. To the extent that this is the case, some of us may be carriers of the disease without knowing how dangerous we are to our friends and loved ones.

What can we do?

All that we can do to protect ourselves and to slow the spread of the virus is to practice social distancing – avoiding interacting with other people and, when interactions are unavoidable, such as buying food and supplies, staying at least six feet away from others. Other ways include washing our hands regularly and using hand sanitizer. Trying not to touch our faces. Trying not to touch items or surfaces (such as doorknobs or handles) that others have touched and washing our hands or using hand sanitizer when we cannot avoid it.

Ordinary soap or dishwashing detergent is sufficient to destroy or neutralize the coronavirus. This is why handwashing is so important. Wipe down surfaces that are regularly used – such as countertops and doorknobs or handles – three times a day.

As of the last report that I got this morning, New Mexico has over 100 confirmed coronavirus cases, some of which are in Sandoval County. These are all cases that have been confirmed by testing. But this report does not mean that the virus has not reached our county or our neighborhoods. We must take precautions to protect ourselves because if the virus is not yet here it may be here soon. It is spreading rapidly, and we are not able to conduct tests that would determine the true extent of its spread.

How do you know that you have it?

The signs of COVID 19 are fever, a dry cough, shortness of breath, and a sense of feeling ill. At this time of year, many of us have recurring springtime allergies that may have some of the same symptoms.

New Mexico has limited supplies of test kits for showing whether you have the coronavirus. The state is opening additional test stations throughout the state on a daily basis. But the tests are not given to everyone who wants to be tested. Call the state hotline 855-600-3453 for current information on the nearest testing location and the criteria currently being used to decide who gets tested.

What do you do if you think you may have it?

Immediately isolate yourself from other family members, friends and neighbors. Go into a separate room and close the door. Do not let anyone else in. Have others leave food and liquids outside the door for you to retrieve. They should sanitize everything that leaves your room with soap and water.

If you have more than one bathroom, designate one for your use and do not let others use it. If you must share a bathroom with others, wipe down all surfaces that you use, including faucets and handles, with a soapy rag. Cover your mouth whenever you cough; the virus can remain in tiny droplets in the air for several hours.

Do not go to the hospital, the Cuba Clinic, or your doctor's office. If you have the virus and enter an emergency room or doctor's office, you expose everyone there to the virus. Instead, call your doctor or call the New Mexico Health Department hotline – 855-600-3453 – to get medical advice on what to do.

The recommended treatment is to isolate yourself, rest, and take lots of fluids. You should pay attention to your breathing. If you find that you are having serious difficulty breathing, call

911. Emergency personnel will come to your home, examine you, and transport you to the hospital if your condition requires hospitalization.

If you have someone else transport you to the hospital, neither you nor the person taking you may leave your vehicle or enter the hospital. Most hospitals now have receiving stations in the parking lot. You must remain in your vehicle and proceed to the receiving tent or call ahead to arrange for medical persons to meet you at a designated place. The number for the Sandoval Regional Medical Center emergency room is 505-994-7000. If you do not have this number handy or cannot find the receiving station, call 911 for information on contacting hospital staff.

What do you do if you know you have been in contact with someone who now has the virus?

Isolate yourself and call your doctor or the Department of Health hotline 855-600-3453 for further instructions.

How can we help each other survive this crisis?

Stay in touch with your neighbors – preferably by telephone, text, email or social media. Check in with them and make sure that they have the food and supplies they need. If you know that a neighbor has isolated her or himself because of symptoms of the coronavirus, check in with them several times a day. If they do not respond, call 911 and explain the situation. Beware of exposing yourself to the virus.

Where can you get additional information or help?

Please feel free to call Department of Health hotline 855-600-3453 if you have questions or need information. **Call 911 if you need medical help.**

Stay safe and practice social distancing. In a crisis like this we are all our brothers' and sisters' keepers. We will get through this if we stick together, so long as we stay six feet apart!