March 18, 2020

Governor Ralph Northam COVID-19 Updates

Today, the Governor announced the following updates regarding COVID-19.

- Virginia now has 77 reported cases, with 14 in the central health district, 19 in the eastern district, 39 in northern Virginia, five in the north west district and none in southwest Virginia.
- Virginia has three "outbreaks" of COVID-19. An outbreak is defined as two or more cases traced to a common exposure. These include James City County, which has 17 cases and 315 contacts, and two separate outbreaks in the Richmond area.

Testing. The state lab is in the process of running 65 COVID-19 tests. LabCorp and Quest are running additional tests. Current state testing capacity is estimated to be between 260-360 patients. We are expecting to receive more tests from the CDC to increase testing capacity. Virginia is getting testing supplies from the Federal Government and is directing them to the localities in greatest need. Testing is only conducted on those who pass the screening process with a focus on the highest risk patients first.

The State Health Commissioner continued to stress that if someone feels ill and is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, they should call their primary care doctor, who should be able to collect a sample to enable testing to be performed. If the primary care doctor is unable to take the sample, individuals are advised to contact their local health department.

For more information about Virginia cases and testing, click here.

Virginia hospital capacity. It was shared that the capacity of Virginia's hospitals to manage those infected with COVID-19 includes 2,000 ICU beds and six regional healthcare coalitions have 400 ventilator units that can be deployed. The Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Association has extensive information and online resources available through their web site, located here. Included are FAQs re: COVID-19.

Blood shortage. The COVID-19 outbreak is causing blood drives to be cancelled which is creating a critical blood shortage according to the Red Cross. The Governor urged all healthy Virginians to donate blood. For more information, visit the Red Cross here.

Early/absentee voting. The Administration is recommending that Virginians vote early/absentee for the upcoming May elections. More information including how to receive an absentee ballot is available by visiting the Virginia Board of Elections.

The Virginia Department of Education. DOE is working with the Federal government to obtain maximum flexibility for student testing requirements and standards. There is a particular focus on ensuring that this situation doesn't impact the high school seniors' ability to graduate. The Governor is evaluating but has made no decision as to whether or not he will extend school closures. Individual

school divisions do have the ability to extend closures in their communities. For updates from Virginia DOE related to COVID-19, click here.

To view the Governor's briefing, click here.

For more information on Virginia's efforts related to COVID-19, click here.

For COVID-19 updates from the Virginia Department of Social Services, click here.