



TOOELE COUNTY  
**HEALTH**  
DEPARTMENT



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[www.tooelehealth.org](http://www.tooelehealth.org)

March 2, 2020

Dear Community Leader:

The Tooele County Health Department (TCHD) is actively monitoring the ongoing outbreak of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) that began in China and has subsequently spread to several other countries, including the United States. The TCHD is coordinating closely with public health partners and medical care providers. Though the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) considers COVID-19 to be a serious public health concern based on current information, for the general American public, who are unlikely to be exposed to this virus at this time, the immediate health risk from COVID-19 is considered low.

I recognize that Tooele County community leaders may be concerned about the current situation. To help address your concerns, I would like to share the following information about what you can do to help protect our communities from COVID-19. I am confident we are prepared to handle cases of COVID-19 should it reach our community.

The symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to seasonal illnesses that are routinely spread in the community around this time of year – namely a fever, cough, or shortness of breath. On their own, these symptoms are not worrisome and should not cause alarm.

However, it is important for you to know if residents may be at risk for contracting COVID-19. While most COVID-19 cases outside of China have been associated with travel to or from China, community spread is being detected in a growing number of countries. Destinations with widespread or sustained community spread of COVID-19 include China, Iran, Italy, Japan, and South Korea. Other destinations with instances of apparent community spread include Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam. Public health identifies people at-risk for COVID-19 if:

- They have returned from travel to mainland China in the past 14 days, **OR**
- They had close contact with a person who has been confirmed positive with COVID-19, or other affected countries.

The TCHD receives daily reports from the Utah Department of Health (UDOH). The UDOH receives daily reports from the CDC regarding residents who are returning to Utah from travel to mainland China and other affected countries. Utah public health agencies work to contact these individuals within 24 hours of their arrival in the state and provide them with detailed information about steps they should take to protect themselves and others.

This system is not perfect, and you may learn about an at-risk resident before we do. If this occurs, contact TCHD and we will provide guidance on your specific situation. In the future, if we have individuals returning from areas where they have been in isolation or quarantined please know they have already passed through rigorous CDC screening. These individuals will not be released in an infectious state and are not at risk of spreading this disease.

While the immediate risk of this new virus for most of the American public is believed to be low at this time, everyone can do their part to help us respond to this emerging public health threat. It's currently flu and respiratory disease season and CDC recommends getting a flu vaccine, taking everyday preventive actions to help stop the spread of germs, and taking flu antivirals if prescribed.

In the event it becomes necessary public health may take any, or all, of the following steps to protect at-risk people and the general population:

- Quarantine or isolation of at-risk persons for 14 days after their last possible exposure to the virus (usually determined by the date they left mainland China or other affected countries).
- Guidance for self-assessment of symptoms, and information on what to do if the at-risk person needs to seek medical care.
- Instructions to limit their exposure to public gathering places such as events, stores, churches, schools, etc.
- Public health officials will maintain contact with at-risk persons to assess the individual's likelihood of developing COVID-19.

What you can do is promote family preparedness. You, your family, co-workers, and neighbors need to be prepared. I am including a link to the Tooele County Emergency Management Family Preparedness Guide. [http://tcem.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/tcem\\_family\\_guide.pdf](http://tcem.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/tcem_family_guide.pdf) This is a complete guide to prepare for emergencies. 1-Make a plan, 2-Get a kit, 3-Be informed, 4-Get involved.

I also want to promote preparedness for government agencies and businesses. This will help public and private sectors ensure they are able to operate with adaptations like telework and flexible sick leave policies, as well as how to respond if an employee gets sick. I am including a link to the Tooele Ready Business Guide. [http://tcem.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/tcem\\_-\\_business\\_guide.pdf](http://tcem.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/tcem_-_business_guide.pdf)

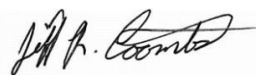
This criterion may change as this disease progresses or changes. As this evolves, I will work to keep you updated on any changes. Our residents should always be reminded of good hygiene practices such as regularly washing their hands and covering their coughs and sneezes with their elbow or a tissue. Employees who are sick should always be encouraged to stay home from work.

While the origin of this particular outbreak can be traced back to China, it would be grossly inappropriate, not to mention medically ineffective, to ostracize anyone from our communities or exclude anyone from our places of public gathering based on their race, nationality, or ethnicity.

Please visit our website <https://tooelehealth.org/coronavirus-disease-2019/> to view the most updated versions of COVID-19 documents including "Frequently Asked Questions", COVID-19 flyer in English and Spanish and a poster you can print or copy and display. This information is changing on almost a daily basis so please check these weblinks frequently for the most up to date information. Additional information can be found at <https://health.utah.gov/coronavirus> or at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.

We can all contribute to a healthy community, and we appreciate your willingness to help protect the public health in Tooele County. If you have concerns or questions, please feel free to contact us at 435-277-2300.

Sincerely,



Jeff Coombs, MPH, LEHS  
Executive Director/Health Officer  
Tooele County Health Department