



Gov. Evers Declares Public Health Emergency Due to COVID-19

Gov. Tony Evers today declared a public health emergency in response to new cases of COVID-19, directing the Department of Health Services (DHS) to use all the resources necessary to respond to and contain the outbreak. Just this week, Wisconsin has had 5 new cases of COVID-19 and Illinois and Minnesota have also seen increased cases. With these new cases there needs to be extensive contact tracing to contain the spread of COVID-19. Wisconsin also has 37 residents returning to Wisconsin from the Princess Cruise Ship who may have been exposed and need to be in monitored self quarantine for 14 days.

“We have been working aggressively to slow the spread of COVID-19, and this declaration allows us to get the resources we need to continue to be proactive when it comes to protecting Wisconsinites,” said Gov. Evers. “It is the latest step in the work our state agencies have been doing around the clock with our healthcare partners to prepare for the possibility of COVID-19 becoming a global pandemic.”

The governor signed an executive order that directs DHS to take all necessary and appropriate measures to prevent and respond to incidences of COVID-19. It allows the Department to purchase, store, or distribute appropriate medications, regardless of insurance or other health coverage, as needed to respond to the emergency. It also authorizes state funds to support local health departments with costs related to isolation and quarantine, as well as the use of the Wisconsin National Guard.

Wisconsin's latest cases are in Pierce, Dane, Fond du Lac, and Waukesha counties. The state's first confirmed case of COVID-19 was discovered in Dane County in early February. That patient was exposed to known cases while in China, and after isolating at home has now recovered and is doing well.

If COVID-19 begins to spread in Wisconsin communities, state and local public health officials will consider community interventions such as social distancing, replacing in-person meetings with telework when possible, reviewing workplace sick leave policies, modifying, postponing or canceling mass gatherings, implementing restrictions on visitors to residential treatment and living facilities, and closures of schools, childcare settings.

Decisions about the implementation of community measures will be made by state and local officials based on CDC and DHS guidance, as well as the scope of the outbreak.

People should follow simple steps to avoid getting sick, including:

- Frequent and thorough hand washing with soap and water.
- Covering coughs and sneezes.
- Avoiding touching your face.
- Staying home when sick.

“This can be a frightening time, but our state has incredible health professionals who are working to contain the spread,” Gov. Evers said. “We cannot do this alone, we need all hands on deck to protect the public from COVID-19.”