



**For immediate release
Tuesday, March 10, 2020**

Bi-County Health Officer Declares State of Emergency for COVID-19 Preparedness

While there remain no confirmed cases of COVID-19 (novel coronavirus) in Yuba-Sutter at this time, Bi-County Health Officer Dr. Phuong Luu today recommended both county Board of Supervisors declare a state of emergency – a step already taken by 15 other California counties that is necessary to gain access to resources that will help bolster ongoing efforts to respond to the public health threat. The Yuba County Board of Supervisors and Sutter County Board of Supervisors will consider her recommendation at their respective meetings on Tuesday, March 10, 2020.

Dr. Luu and staff from Yuba and Sutter counties believe this is the right time to make the declaration to ensure an appropriate, timely and organized response in the event COVID-19 cases are identified in the bi-county region. Dr. Luu believes it is simply a matter of time before someone in the region tests positive for the virus, so increasing monitoring and responsive capabilities now will further enable public health teams to prevent as much community transmission as possible.

Staff from both Yuba and Sutter counties have been working closely together to monitor residents who believe they could have COVID-19, communicate plans with area hospitals and health clinics, ensure nurses and first responders have the tools necessary to keep themselves healthy and safe, and communicate important information to the public. A coronavirus preparedness group was established last month, and that group has been in communication with each facet of the community – like schools, hospitals, Beale Air Force Base, and public safety entities – to ensure the area as a whole is equipped with the best knowledge and tools to minimize the impact of COVID-19.

Over the past several weeks of COVID-19 concerns, public health staff from both counties have been operating what is known as a Department Operations Center (DOC) at a low level. The DOC is now elevating to the next level and stepping up efforts to address the health threat. A bi-county Emergency Operations Center based in Yuba County has also opened. This means staff from both counties are working together around the clock to ensure that resources and staffing remain in healthy and reliable supply.

A Bi-County Call Center has been established to respond to inquiries from area residents regarding the COVID-19 threat. The Call Center number is 749-7700, and will be open 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. The Call Center is intended to field general questions, not provide medical advice. Please call your primary care physician for medical advice.

Yuba and Sutter counties have been planning for this possibility and staff are properly prepared to handle the work to come. Since there are NO confirmed cases in either county, the approach may look different from Sacramento, Placer, and other counties, where community transmission has been confirmed. Nonetheless, increasing the level of public health response is necessary in focusing vital resources on preventing severe illnesses and deaths.

With no confirmed cases at this time, and per California Department of Public Health guidelines, en masse cancellation of schools is not recommended. Schools will continue with measures to prevent spread of COVID-19. The Counties continue to work closely with the Offices of Education in both counties and their respective school districts to plan and prepare our schools for COVID-19 (those CDPH guidelines can be read [here](#)).

Dr. Luu continues to recommend hand-washing and practicing good hygiene. Vulnerable populations – the elderly and those with chronic illnesses – are encouraged to stay home as much as possible and avoid large gatherings. Keeping yourself from getting sick in the first place remains key in this effort.

If you have experienced any symptoms of acute respiratory illness such as fever, chills, or cough and have recently traveled to a country with widespread community transmission (Iran, Italy, China, South Korea), or been in close contact with a patient who has had COVID-19, immediately contact your medical provider by phone – do not go into Urgent Care, the Emergency Room or the doctor's office. Instead, you should call your personal physician, who can assess whether your illness matches those of COVID-19 and if testing should be completed. If testing is indicated, the physician will then contact Dr. Luu, Bi-County Health Officer for consultation.

For more information and resources, check BePreparedYuba.org and BePreparedSutter.org.