
HEALTH DEPARTMENT
NEWS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Kent County Health Officer Issues COVID-19 Health Alert
Kent County's First Death Linked to COVID-19 Virus Reported

GRAND RAPIDS, MI (March 21, 2020) – On Saturday, March 21, 2020, the Kent County Health Department confirmed the first death in Kent County from the COVID-19 virus. The victim is a 71-year-old male with underlying health issues.

“Our hearts go out to the family of this patient and everyone who is impacted by this illness in our community,” said Kent County Health Department Director Dr. Adam London. “This death underscores how important it is for all of us to do what we can to help mitigate the spread of this virus, so it doesn’t impact any more residents.”

In light of this development, Dr. London issued the following public health alert in an effort to mitigate the COVID-19 outbreak.

Public Gatherings

All Kent County organizations and residents are strongly urged to adhere to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendation to limit gatherings to 10 people or less, especially organizations that serve populations who are at a higher risk.

This recommendation is stricter than Executive Order 2020-11 (COVID-19) issued by Governor Whitmer on March 17, 2020, banning all events including 50 or more people. One of the best ways we can protect ourselves from this virus is to avoid public gatherings. Keeping distance ensures people interact less with each other giving the virus fewer opportunities to spread.

Prevention

Residents are encouraged to practice the following prevention tips:

1. Avoid all unnecessary travel
2. Keep your distance from others of at least six feet (social distance)
3. Cover your mouth and nose with your elbow when coughing or sneezing
4. Wash your hands frequently with warm soapy water for at least 20 seconds
5. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
6. If feeling ill, call your doctor

KCHD has been in the business of providing health services to Kent County since 1931. The Health Department is home to nearly 260 employees including public health nurses, sanitarians, health educators, technicians, public health administrators, and specialized staff at the Kent County Animal Shelter. The Health Department operates one main clinic and three satellite clinics located in Kentwood, Rockford, and Grand Rapids. To learn more about KCHD services, visit www.accesskent.com/health.

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More Non-Essential Services Closed but No Need to Overstock on Household Supplies

Governor Gretchen Whitmer signed Executive Order 2020-20, instructing all facilities that provide non-essential personal care services to temporarily close. This order does not apply to services necessary for medical treatment as determined by a licensed medical provider. It also reaffirms the other temporary closures of places of public accommodation required by Executive Order 2020-9.

The closure of non-essential services is not cause for alarm and does not warrant the need to overstock on supplies. Many local stores continue to experience shortages of toilet paper, cleaning supplies and other household items. Customer overstocking, not a disrupted supply chain, is the reason shelves are empty. The best way to protect yourself and others is by following public health guidance, limiting public gatherings, practicing social distancing and good hygiene — not by hoarding supplies.

The Kent County Health Department will continue to update the community with information as the situation changes or new information becomes available.

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