

COVID-19 Update 3/15/2020

Hi all-

As we expected, the situation is evolving quickly. I can't tell you how appreciative I am of everyone's efforts to look out for the safety and well-being of this agency, our staff, and the people in our custody and under our supervision. The ICS team, central office leadership, HR, division leadership, Wardens, CRC Managers and District Managers have been out and about and participating in multiple calls over the course of this weekend to monitor events and refine our prevention, preparedness and response protocols. We have another ICS meeting scheduled for 1600 hrs today, and I'll provide an update this evening with more information about what you can expect moving forward.

For now, I just want to tell all of you. . . Thank you! It sure feels like our world changed overnight. The fear and uncertainty that gripped a lot of neighboring states showed up on our front doorstep. But you've proven again precisely what makes this outfit special – when things appear at their worst, you are at your best. Our best is what it's going to take to protect each other, the people in our charge, and the safety of our communities.

I've also been moved by care and concern your leadership has shown for your wellbeing throughout this process. At every ICS meeting or call, the theme that emerges first and foremost isn't what needs to be done, but what we need to do for the people carrying out the important work. We're mindful that the state is considering potential school closures and childcare will be of significant concern for a number of you. We also know that all of us have loved ones who are at greater risk to potentially be impacted by this illness. We'll have more information and specific direction tomorrow for how we can address special circumstances as they arise.

In times like these, it is important that you stay up to date on how you can take precautions to protect you and your loved ones from exposure. It also is important that you rely on the best available medical information instead of rumor. I was made aware today that some staff are concerned that if the virus is detected in our facilities that staff will be quarantined in place. I understand how those rumors can take hold in the absence of other information, but that simply is not true. With what we know about the virus, how it is transmitted, and how to mitigate exposure, we are confident anyone exhibiting symptoms or exposed to the virus can be quickly and safely removed from our facilities and into the care of medical professionals without creating risk for others.

Thanks again for all you do. I'm so proud of the professionalism and dedication you bring even at times of great inconvenience. I'll have another update this evening with more details about changes to operating practices moving forward. Take care of yourself!

Thanks-
Josh