Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) arrives in Delaware

The global outbreak of coronavirus disease (COVID-19), reached Delaware on March 11, the same day the World Health Organization (WHO) named it a pandemic. As of March 29, 232 laboratory-confirmed cases in the state have been reported to the Division of Public Health (DPH) since March 11.

The Delawareans diagnosed with COVID-19, by county, are: New Castle County, 141; Kent County, 25; and Sussex County, 66. Nine Delawareans have recovered from COVID-19 and six have passed away due to COVID-19 complications. Thirty-three individuals are currently hospitalized; nine are critically ill. Of the 232 cases, 114 are male and 118 are female; ages range from 1 to 90. The source of exposure for many of these positive cases is unknown, which indicates community spread of the virus is occurring in the state.

"Sick persons should not leave their homes, especially if they have fever, cough, shortness of breath, vomiting, or diarrhea; and they should call their health care provider," said DPH Director Dr. Karyl Rattay. "Those who are well should practice social distancing (6 feet or more from others), practice good hygiene, and clean and sanitize commonly touched surfaces every day. We all have to behave as if we are carrying the virus."

COVID-19 was first detected in mainland China in December 2019. In its March 29 Situation Report, WHO reported 634,835 confirmed cases worldwide and 29,891 deaths.

DPH encourages residents who are well to practice social distancing (keeping at least six feet away from others) and avoiding large gatherings or crowds. Individuals with underlying conditions should be especially careful and contact their primary provider if they have any COVID-19 concerns. Individuals who are sick, particularly with fever, cough, and shortness of breath, should stay home and contact their primary health care provider for guidance.

COVID-19 symptoms include fever, cough, and shortness of breath and may appear between two and 14 days after exposure. Reported illnesses range from people with little to no symptoms (similar to the common cold) to people being severely ill and dying. While some ill individuals are hospitalized, many recover by resting, drinking plenty of liquids, and taking pain and fever-reducing medications.

The CDC recommends that all individuals, especially those who are age 65 and older and those with chronic underlying health conditions:

• Stay home.
• Wash your hands often with soap and water.
• Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
• Avoid all cruise travel and non-essential air travel.
• Avoid close contact with people, especially those who are sick, by keeping six feet away.
• Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.
• Have enough household items and groceries on hand so you are prepared to stay at home for a period of time.
• Have a plan in the event you get sick and discuss with household members, other relatives, and friends what you might need.

For the latest information on Delaware's response, visit de.gov/coronavirus. Those with general COVID-19 questions can call DPH's Coronavirus Call Center at 1-866-408-1899, or 711 for individuals who are hearing impaired; or email DPHCall@delaware.gov. Hours of operation are 8:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, and 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.