



Health officials confirm first death due to COVID-19 in Minnesota

Victim contracted the virus through contact with another COVID-19 case

3.21.20 The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) today reported the first confirmed death of a Minnesota resident due to COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

The death occurred March 19 in a Ramsey County resident in their 80s who recently tested positive for COVID-19 and was the contact of an earlier confirmed case.

“Gwen and I extend our deepest sympathies to the loved ones during this time of loss,” said Governor Tim Walz. “As COVID-19 continues to spread in Minnesota, we must all do what we can to keep each other safe.”

“My heart is with the family, friends, and neighbors who are grieving,” said Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan. “This loss is deeply felt by our entire community. Now more than ever, each of us must do our part to prevent the spread of this virus, especially to our most vulnerable Minnesotans.”

Minnesota Commissioner of Health Jan Malcolm said the death underscores the importance of protecting our most vulnerable Minnesotans during the outbreak.

“Our condolences go out to the family and friends of the patient,” Commissioner Malcolm said. “We’ve all seen reports of outbreak-related deaths in other states and countries, but this Minnesota death reminds us how important it is to continue working to protect each other during this outbreak.”

Commissioner Malcolm emphasized the importance of all Minnesotans doing their part to slow the spread of the virus and protect those in our communities who might be at higher risk of severe illness or death. The most vulnerable include those over 65 and those with underlying health conditions.

Steps that everyone can take to slow the spread of the virus include:

- **Cover your coughs and sneezes** with your elbow or sleeve, or a tissue and then throw the tissue in the trash and wash your hands afterwards.
- **Washing your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds**, especially after going to the bathroom or before eating. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- **Avoid touching your face** – especially your eyes, nose and mouth – with unwashed hands.
- **Stay home if you have cold- or flu-like symptoms**, for seven days after your illness onset or three days after your fever resolves without fever reducing medicine, and avoid close contact with people who are sick.

State and local public health have implemented a series of community interventions such as temporary closures of restaurants, bars and schools, recommended social distancing measures such as staying home as much as possible, maintaining a distance of 6 feet from other people, replacing in-person work meetings with teleworking, and cancelling gatherings of 50 people or more. Also, do not hold events with more than 10 people where the majority of participants are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19, including gatherings such as those at retirement facilities, assisted living facilities, developmental homes and support groups for people with health conditions.

Visit [Strategies to Slow the Spread of COVID-19 in Minnesota](#) for our recommended community mitigation strategies.

Since the outbreak started in December 2019, more than 284,000 cases and 11,800 deaths have been reported worldwide. The U.S. reported 19,624 cases and 260 deaths as of this morning.

More information about the coronavirus situation in Minnesota, the U.S. and internationally can be found on MDH's [Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#) webpage.

A hotline for the public is open seven days a week, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. The hotline number is 651-201-3920.

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