NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 22, 2020

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Public Health Officials Announce First COVID-19 Death

BLOOMINGTON, IL – The McLean County Health Department was notified by the Illinois Department of Public Health of the first novel coronavirus (COVID-19)-related death in McLean County, Illinois.

The individual, female in her 70s, tested positive for COVID-19 earlier this week and was in intensive care.

"We are deeply saddened by this loss. Within McLean County Government, our hearts go out to the family and friends who are mourning the loss of their loved one. We cannot even begin to understand how they feel, and we send our sincerest condolences," McLean County Health Department Administrator Jessica McKnight said in a statement.

The McLean County Health Department, with support from McLean County Government Leadership, chose to issue a press release for this occurrence, out of respect for the individual and their family during this difficult time, while also highlighting the federal regulatory requirements the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

In its Accountability requirements, HIPAA requires we protect health data and its integrity, confidentiality, and availability. The Act provides protection regarding personal health information. And, there are consequences for healthcare providers and others who violate HIPAA.

This unfortunate news should remind the public of the importance of social distancing and other COVID-19 prevention recommendations. Furthermore, this death shows how critical it is for all of us to follow Governor Pritzker's shelter-in-place order which went into effect at 5:00pm on March 21, 2020.

The choice to send a press release instead of holding a press conference conveys the deepest respect for the individual that lost their life and for all the people who will grieve this loss. It is not our place to make this a media event but rather to take this news as a stark reminder of the serious consequences of COVID-19.

Residents must be vigilant and continue to take preventative actions to prevent the spread of illness. Everyone has a role to play in staying healthy and keeping others healthy. Remember the 3 Cs – clean, cover, contain.

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Clean
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

Cover
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- If no tissue is available, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands.

Contain
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

For more information on COVID-19, contact the McLean County Health Department at (309)888-5450 or the Illinois Department of Public Health coronavirus hotline at 1-800-889-3931 or visit idph.illinois.gov (http://www.dph.illinois.gov/covid19) for questions and more information.

It is very important for the public to implement social distancing to limit the spread of this virus. Social distancing means putting distance between yourself and others and staying home as much as possible. Be mindful of those who are at a greater risk for contracting this virus, including older adults and those with certain health conditions.

Social distancing:
- **Stay home when you are sick**
- **Avoid mass gathering and large crowds (avoid social gatherings of more than 10 people)**
- **Limit the amount of time spent in the community (all non-essential activities need to be avoided)**
- **If you must pick up prescriptions or groceries, use caution and keep a 6ft distance from others.**
- **Work from home as much as possible**

https://health.mcleancountyil.gov

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