



March 15, 2020

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

COVID-19 UPDATE – Timeline

Havre, Montana – The following is a situational timeline in regards to the COVID-19 virus in our area. This statement is being released by the newly formed Joint Information Center (JIC). The group consists of representatives from the following agencies: Northern Montana Health Care (NMHC), Bullhook Community Health Center (BCHC), Hill County Health Department (HCHD), Blaine County Health Department (BCHD), Rocky Boy Health Center (RBHC), and Indian Health Services, (IHS). This group was formed to ensure that the community receives the most accurate information in a timely manner. Please direct any inquiries to the group through Kim Larson, Public Health Director for Hill County Health Department. She can be reached at (406) 400-2415.

February 19th, 2020:

10:00 am and 2:00 pm: Together with local partners, the Hill County Health Department and Blaine County Health Department held a COVID-19 preparedness tabletop exercise to prepare for COVID-19.

March 2, 2020:

11:30 am: Hill County Health Department shared information on the current COVID-19 situation in Montana and ensured residents that it is currently not in the area.

7:30 pm: Hill County Health Department put out information on the best steps people can take to keep themselves and their family healthy during this time.

March 9, 2020:

9:00 am: BCHD opened an Emergency Coordination Center (ECC) with Disaster and Emergency Services (DES) support and formalized their Incident Command Structure (ICS) in response to the public health emergency of COVID-19.

March 11, 2020:

5:00 pm: Hill County Health Department clarified the information that was out regarding the media reporting a positive COVID-19 case in Montana. The case was a Montana resident who has not been in the state of Montana since November 2019.

March 12, 2020:

Blaine County released its first weekly situational update on COVID-19 to be shared with County employees and LEPC members.

Friday, March 13, 2020:

11:00 am: One suspected COVID-19 case was seen at the Northern Montana Family Medical Center. The patient was tested for Flu, Strep and COVID-19. The patients was asked to self-isolate while waiting on results. Four NMHC employees were quarantined as a result of their interaction with the patient. Hill County Health Department was notified.

Two familial patients also reported to the Emergency Department fitting the criteria for suspected COVID-19. As these patients were seen at the hospital, Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) for the medical personnel was used. The patients were also tested and asked to self-isolate. Hill County Health Department was notified.

12:00 pm: An Incident Command Center (ICC) was set up at Northern Montana Hospital (NMH) as part of their Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). Dr. Kevin Harada, Chief of Medical Staff at NMHC, Dr. Karrie Lien and Dr. Douglas Dightman were the providers that were participating in the discussions. As a result of their efforts a decision was made to open a separate facility for suspected flu patients. The building formerly known as the Northern Montana Medical Group East was set up to serve as a triage area for any incoming suspected COVID-19 and Influenza cases.

2:30 pm: A press release was issued by NMHC stating that there are currently no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the Havre community but that there have been several suspected cases. The public was asked to curtail any non-urgent visits to the Emergency Department. They were also advised of the symptoms for the COVID-19 virus. Patients were asked to call prior to visiting the hospital.

HCHD posted information stating that there are no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Hill County currently, and they will keep the community updated as the situation evolves.

3:45 pm: NMH announced that they will be closing the hospitals to all visitors. The community was asked to report to the Emergency Department doors for all entry into the Hospital building. The Northern Montana Care Center (NMCC) was also closed to visitors. In the Labor & Delivery Department (LDRP) at NMH, laboring mothers will be allowed one adult support person to be with them. There will be no children admitted into the LDRP under any circumstances. At NMCC, if a patient is facing imminent death, special arrangements will be made for visitors.

6:00 pm: NMHC announced that their Flu Clinic was now open. Patients were asked to call ahead or upon arrival so that the first contact could be made with any suspected cases.

9:00 pm: Governor Steve Bullock confirmed four presumptively positive cases of coronavirus, or COVID-19, in Montana. Rocky Boy Health Center announced plans to cancel and/or reschedule appointments for the next two weeks. No visitors will be allowed on their premises.

HCHD posted Governor Bullock's news release regarding the presumptive positives on their Facebook page.

Saturday, March 14, 2020:

11:00 am: HCHD posted on their Facebook page correct information about who should be quarantined/isolated when it comes to COVID-19.

1:00 pm: ICC at NMHC holds meeting to discuss traffic flow. As test results will not be made available until Monday, provisions were made to proceed with an abundance of caution. Five patients with flu-like

symptoms were seen at the Flu Clinic, as well as numerous phone inquiries. All meetings scheduled on the NMH campus were cancelled.

Sunday, March 15, 2020:

1:00 pm: ICC at NMHC continues to monitor situation. Flu Clinic is open all day to triage suspected COVID-19 patients. Per a recommendation from the American College of Surgeons the decision was made to cancel any elective surgical procedures or tests scheduled for Monday and Tuesday of upcoming week. Arrangements were made to notify patients of the changes.

At NMHC screening procedures were changed to include a temperature check on all incoming visitors. Employees were asked to self-monitor for symptoms. Some outpatient services were discontinued and patients were notified. The decision was made to have the Northern Montana Family Medical Center (NMFMC) and the Northern Montana Specialty Medical Center (NMSMC) open, but to defer all flu-like symptoms to the Flu Clinic. Screenings will be done at the doors of both clinics. An additional patient was tested for COVID-19.

5:00 pm: Governor Bullock directs the closure of Public K-12 schools for two Weeks; and strongly recommends social distancing measures to slow the spread of COVID-19.

5:30 pm: HCHD posted the Governor's news release closing K-12 schools on their Facebook Page.

6:00 pm: Press releases were sent out about the NMHC cancellations. Dr. Harada requested that a separate statement be made to the community about NMHC's Social Distancing recommendations. One patient was admitted into NMH with COVID-19 symptoms.

HCHD posted Governor Bullock's recommendations for Social Distancing on their Facebook page.

Monday, March 16, 2020:

8:00 am: Screening protocols went into effect for NMHC and BCHC prior to appointments.

1:30 pm: BCHC began limiting admittance by asking patients to either come alone or to bring one adult support person with them. Children, unless they are to be seen by a provider, should not be brought into the health center if possible. Patients were asked to limit the number of family members coming to the patient's appointment to help with social distancing.

Rocky Boy declared a State of Emergency and adopted a freeze of all work related travel by Tribal employees.

3:00 pm: Blaine County Health Department suspends all walk-in office visits at their facility.

5:00 pm: Representatives from Havre EMS, Police, and Hill County Health Department met with NMHC ICC. Discussions about the current situation as well as suggestions for moving forward through this crisis were heard. Guidance from the American College of Surgeons for non-emergent surgical procedures was presented. Arrangements for further screening procedures were made. 18 patients were seen at the Flu Clinic.

BCHD and HCHD issue press release on guidance for illness, and guidance for social distancing.

6:00 pm: Results from the 4 early cases of suspected COVID-19 were presented as negative.

Havre Fire and Ambulance Department is asking that the public, when calling for EMS or Police services, inform the dispatcher if they, or someone in their household, is experiencing any flu-like symptoms. This will allow the responders to put on the appropriate PPE prior to entering the household.

Tuesday, March 17, 2020:

10:30 am: Representatives from Havre City, Hill County, Northern Montana Health Care, Havre Public Schools, Bullhook Community Health Center, Hill County Health Department, Blaine County Health Department, Rocky Boy Health Center, Montana District Court, Havre Police, Hill County Sheriff, Havre EMS, and Indian Health Services met to discuss the current situation. A decision to form a JIC was made and the members participating were decided upon.

The Public Health Officer announced that as of 12:00 pm the Hill County Health Department has ordered the following:

- The closure of all bars, breweries, distilleries, casinos, and restaurants to all services except drive-through, delivery and pick-up/carryout services. People can still come into the establishments and order food and take it to go at this time.
- That all gyms, athletic clubs, fitness studios, and yoga studios are limited to 10 people within the facility at a time. (Including staff)

5:00 pm: NMHC hold meeting at ICC for updates. One additional test has come back negative. Flu Clinic will remain open daily.

RBHC requests that patients that have a cough, fever, shortness of breath enter through the emergency entrance of their facility. They are encouraging community members to stay home if they are sick or if a family member is sick. If they are feeling ill and may have been exposed to the virus, they are advised to call and speak with a nurse prior to coming to the clinic. Over the counter medication for symptomatic treatment will be available by phone triage.

More information about COVID-19 can be found at the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) website at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.

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