



Public Affairs Office, usarmy.apg.medcom-aphc.mbx.pao@mail.mil, 410-417-0560, March 2, 2020

Background: There is an expanding global outbreak of viral respiratory illness called Coronavirus Disease or COVID-19. While most COVID-19 cases outside of China have been associated with travel to or from China, community spread is being detected in a growing number of countries. Destinations with widespread or sustained community spread of COVID-19 currently include China, Iran, Italy, Japan and South Korea. The fact that COVID-19 has caused illness, including illness resulting in death, and sustained person-to-person spread is concerning. The potential public health threat posed by COVID-19 is high, both globally and to the United States. But individual risk is dependent on exposure. While supporting other government agencies with response to the COVID-19 threat, the U.S. Army is responding appropriately to protect the force and maintain operational readiness.

End-state: Through proactive communication efforts, the U.S. Army will ensure all information on measured preparation for Soldiers, Family members, Army Civilians, and contractors, as well as local and host nation community members is distributed. The Army stands ready to support the whole of government to protect the force and reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Opening statement: The U.S. Army is prepared for Coronavirus Disease 2019, or COVID-19 for short. We strongly urge preparedness as more areas of the world are experiencing community transmission. We continue to assess geographic-specific conditions and will adjust our posture, locally, as conditions warrant to ensure the health protection of all members of the team and surrounding communities. The Army is taking appropriate measures to protect the force and maintain operational readiness. We will continue to assess current operations to ensure the safety of all our Soldiers, Family members DA civilians and contractors. We encourage all personnel to follow the guidance on their installation websites and social media platforms daily for updated information about the disease and status of post facilities and closures. Links will also be provided to other reliable information sources like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Closing statement: Our community and daily lives will be impacted by any recommended protective measures that are, or will be, in place so that we can ensure your health and safety during this rapidly changing environment. There will be impact related to travel, scheduled leave and TDY, schools, daycare, child and youth programs, health care clinics and commissary facilities. Together, we can prepare for the real possibility of restricted access or closure of these locations, and we ask your patience and cooperation if and when actions need to be taken. We thank you for your support and patience as we take action to better protect our community's health and when necessary to treat those who become ill. Working together and cooperating is our best defense.



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Themes, Messages and Talking Points

Health and Welfare

MSG: The Army's top priority is the health and welfare of its forces. We are prepared to help combat the spread of COVID-19 and are taking measures to ensure the health of personnel and communities is not impacted by the spread of this virus.

- The Army's medical personnel are highly trained and skilled and will continue to work closely with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to slow down transmission and keep people healthy.
- We review and assess the COVID-19 situation continuously, and if it is determined for public safety to further implement restrictions or closures, we need your assistance in preparing for those actions.
- We are following the guidelines and recommendations of the CDC (as directed by the DOD) and have put into place a process for screening individuals who present with symptoms and providing them with appropriate health care as necessary.

MSG: Force health protection is our top priority. Protecting the force includes mitigating the spread of the virus by following recommended preventive measures.

- The Army Medical Command and Army public health officials are complying with all current public health and installation commander's force health protection guidance and other COVID-19-related health protection measures. They continue to coordinate with federal, state, local and host nation public health personnel.
- Army commanders are applying a risk-based framework to make necessary decisions about response posture to ensure health and safety of our forces and beneficiaries. The current, local condition will be communicated as a Health Protection Condition with updates to recommended actions and any necessary operational changes. Individuals in areas experiencing community transmission are urged to follow all recommended CDC and Health Protection Condition guidelines in order to slow down transmission and keep people healthy.

MSG: The Army remains committed to working with interagency partners to provide support in protecting the American people.

- Commanders will issue specific force health protection guidance to their forces in consultation with their public health emergency management teams.
- The Department of Health and Human Services, led by the CDC, is the federal government lead for the response to the virus; DOD is providing support as needed.



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Messages and TPs for Areas with Sustained or Widespread Transmission

HPCON Charlie – Sustained Community Transmission

MSG: Due to the rapidly changing status of the COVID-19 and sustained community transmission at (insert location/installation), it has become necessary for the protection of your health (or our communities health) that we take actions consistent with a Health Protection Condition Charlie.

- Limiting access (or closure) to the installation (facility) and the cancellation of activities is a measure intended to slow down the spread of (or the transmission) of COVID-19 within our community and to further protect your health.
- We ask your assistance in preparing for the possibility of additional restrictions to post or facilities. There may be a need for social distancing (home isolation, quarantine) in the future and we recommend that you take the following actions today in order to prepare:
 - Get ahead on routine prescriptions by obtaining a 30-90 day supply for all family members (especially those with preexisting medical conditions).
 - Purchase nonperishables, diapers, formula, pet food or other routine items that would be needed for a period of time at home during a sustained period of transmission in the community.
 - Be certain to have appropriate items for the care of pets if a period of social distancing would prevent access to veterinarian clinics.
 - If you or a family member develop symptoms or have questions related to your health, we ask that you contact (insert hotline information or protocol for contacting the MTF) so that our healthcare providers can best address your needs. Contacting the (hotline/ MTF number) is the best way to further protect the community.

HPCON Delta – Widespread Community Transmission

MSG: Due to the rapidly changing status of the COVID-19 outbreak and widespread community transmission at (insert location/installation), it has become necessary for the protection of your health (or our communities health) that we take actions consistent with Health Protection Condition Delta.

- *[If your command has declared a local public health emergency, or one has been declared in your state, it is important to include this talking point]* A local public state of emergency has been declared by (insert authority) and we are partnering with those resources in order to fully support the measures required to protect your health.
- *[If evacuation is necessary or required include this talking point]* Evacuation of our area (installation, region, city, state) has been directed and we stand ready to assist that process with your safety as a priority. Please follow the appropriate instructions that have been put in place and assist those who may need additional support.



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- If you or a family member exhibits symptoms or you have an immediate emergency, we ask that you contact (insert local protocol (e.g., 911) and phone number (hotline, local MTF)) in order that we may better determine how to help. This contact via telephone is to further protect the community and allow for health care providers to respond to you as efficiently as possible.
- Cancellation of all non-mission essential travel is in effect in order to allow for home isolation, medical treatment or social distancing as necessary for our community. We continue to assess those missions critical to our national security daily and coordinate our efforts with the DOD.
- Restriction of movement, cancellation of public gatherings, home isolation and the practice of social distancing is critical. Cancellation of non-mission essential activities is in effect and we are maximizing our telework capabilities to continue operations. A full listing of restricted access or closure of facilities to all personnel can be found at (insert link or location).
- We are encouraging strict adherence to the force health protection measures in place as the spread of the virus is ongoing and includes the majority of our region (area, state, etc.).
- It is of the utmost importance that we work together as community to safeguard lives and resources.



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Q&A

Q1. What is novel coronavirus?

A1: A novel coronavirus is a new coronavirus that has not been previously identified. The virus causing coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is not the same as the coronaviruses that commonly circulate among humans and cause mild illness, like the common cold.

Q2. How does the virus spread?

A2. Person-to-person spread is believed to occur mainly via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes, similar to how influenza viruses and other respiratory pathogens spread. It may also be acquired by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching one's own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes. **The Army is prepared and continuing to take measures to ensure the health of personnel and communities. Army medical personnel are prepared to help combat potential widespread infection.**

Q3. What is a pandemic?

A3. **Force health protection is our top priority. Protecting the force includes mitigating the spread of the virus through following recommended preventive measures.** A pandemic is typically considered to be an epidemic (i.e., widespread outbreak) of a new (or novel) infectious disease that spreads worldwide. The World Health Organization officially designates pandemics.

Q4. There is a lot of misinformation out there that seems designed to create panic – what sources should personnel and community members rely on?

A4. Feeling alarmed is normal when we are threatened, but there are many preventive and protective measures being implemented that minimize the transmission risks of this disease. We urge you to visit your installation websites and social media platforms daily for updated information about the disease and status of the post facilities and closures. Links may be provided to other sources such as the CDC that will have reliable information. **The Army's medical personnel are highly trained and skilled and will continue to work closely with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention under the direction of the Army Surgeon General in order to slow down transmission and keep people healthy.**

Q5. What should families in areas experiencing community transmission do to help the installation manage this disease outbreak?

A. Follow the instructions and health protection measures announced by the installation, check the installation website and social media platforms for daily updates updated information, practice personal hygiene, use preventive measures against transmission, and if symptoms arise call your medical treatment facility for instructions on seeking treatment. **Force health protection is our top priority. Protecting the force includes mitigating the spread of the virus through following recommended preventive measures, which can be found at <https://phc.amedd.army.mil/topics/discond/diseases/Pages/2019-nCoVChina.aspx>**

Q6. If a Service Member on an installation is diagnosed with COVID-19 should installation personnel be concerned?

A. Anyone diagnosed with COVID-19 will be immediately isolated and treated by the MTF staff to prevent transmission of the virus to other persons. Also, possible contacts who were exposed to the individual will be identified and provided appropriate care.



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Q7. What are MTFs doing to educate, prevent, screen and manage efforts?

A7. The MTFs are protecting the force using DOD Force Health Protection Guidance.

- MTFs continue to mitigate the spread of the virus and ensure accountability of all Service members. MTF staffs are preparing and training in CDC processes, and ensuring MTFs rehearse all screening and event management processes.
- The MTF Staff must be protected as well by developing and distributing personal protective equipment (PPE) and developing health surveillance and contact tracing processes in coordination with state and local public health organizations.
- MTFs will respond to the COVID-19 threat through early identification and management of possible cases, protection of staff and beneficiaries within the MTF, and protection of the local community.
- MTFs are continuing to provide education and information, and, in collaboration with the installation leadership, acting in partnership with all state, local and host nation public health organizations.

Q8. There is a lot of confusion around the use of respirators, including the N-95, and surgical masks. How should these products be used?

A8. The use of N-95 respirators is reserved for medical personnel who have been medically cleared, properly fit-tested, trained in the product's use, and enrolled in a respiratory protection program. The N-95 is to protect healthcare workers or others at increased occupational risk from inhaling droplets or aerosols while conducting medical procedures. These important supplies must be conserved for use by medical professionals engaged in the care of sick individuals. Likewise, surgical masks are intended to cover the nose and mouth of ill, symptomatic, potentially infected persons to minimize droplets from being dispersed in the environment during coughing or sneezing. As surgical masks are not effective for preventing infection in otherwise healthy persons, their casual use is not recommended. Although you may see many pictures of people around the world wearing face masks, they are not an effective means of preventing infection from viruses like the one that causes COVID-19. Everyday hygienic practices, such as washing your hands, covering your cough, and avoiding contact with sick people, are the most effective ways to protect yourself from the virus.

Q9. What does “limited to mission essential personnel” mean when bases restrict access?

A9. Certain installation personnel will be identified as essential to continue and maintain basic operations of the installation. These will likely include medical, security, power supply, DPW, transportation and emergency personnel.