



MEMORANDUM

From: Frank Rodriguez III, City Manager *FR*

Date: March 17, 2020

RE: COVID-19

The City of Fort Stockton is committed to the safety of our staff and citizens. We are aware of the current situation surrounding the Coronavirus, also known as COVID-19. As such, the City of Fort Stockton will only be closing the lobby of City Hall as well as the City Hall Annex Building to protect our staff and community.

This includes the Utility Department, Code Enforcement, Housing, and Municipal Court. Personnel will still be available via email or phone.

If you need assistance from any of these departments, please call 432-336-8525 and they will direct you to the appropriate department.

The Utility Department has the following options available to pay your bill:

- Drive Thru Window at City Hall (121 West 2nd St)
- By Phone: 1-833-277-0393
- Online: www.cityoffortstockton.com

Code Enforcement will still be available to issue permits as well via telephone.

Promoting Safety

PECOS COUNTY MEMORIAL HOSPITAL STATEMENT ON COVID-19

As the Infection Control Director for Pecos County Memorial Hospital, I have been asked to make a statement about Covid-19 and our approach to combating this disease. In a nutshell: **Don't panic, but be cautious.** It appears that there are 2 opposing extremes seen on television and on social media. One is of an apocalyptic virus requiring hoarding of everyday items and another is a dismissive tone that believes this is just a bad flu that is blown out of proportion. The truth lies somewhere in the middle. The severity of Covid-19 is not a hoax or political stunt of the mainstream media, but it's also not the end of the world. There is no need to hoard toilet paper or food items, but you need to prevent the transmission of any illnesses by washing your hands, not touching your face and practicing "social distancing" by avoiding large gatherings and public places unless absolutely necessary. Many people are citing the fact that influenza has killed more people than Covid-19 to dismiss the precautions being taken, but influenza has a mortality rate of 0.1%, while Covid-19 has a mortality rate of 1-3%, so in fact, Covid-19 is actually deadlier than influenza. The reason influenza has killed more people is because of a higher prevalence. The whole goal of the precautions taken around the world is to make sure Covid-19 does not become as prevalent as influenza, thus resulting in a larger death toll. And while it is true that the majority of people who contract Covid-19 will only have mild flu-like symptoms, there is still a significant population that has a risk of severe symptoms requiring ICU hospitalization and a risk of dying. People at **highest risk are those over age 65 and those with comorbid conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, cancer or weakened immune systems (chemotherapy, dialysis patients, etc).** Mortality rates are roughly 4-5% for age 60-70, 8-10% for 70-80 and 15% for age > 80. The silver lining is that young, healthy people tend to have milder forms of the disease and recover well without any intervention. To date, there have been no deaths reported of children < 10 yrs of age.

With that said, **those that are young and healthy should do everything in their power to prevent the spread of the disease, not to protect themselves, but rather to protect our elders in the community or those with high risk medical conditions.** "Flattening the curve" and "social distancing" are terms that have been used to describe our strategy for slowing down the spread of Covid-19. By canceling sporting events, concerts, school and other large gatherings, we decrease the chance that a single person can infect a large group of people at the same time. A hospital may not have the beds, ventilators or other resources to be able to handle X number of cases of Covid-19 that present to the hospital during the same week, but it may be able to handle that same number of X cases spread out over 2 months.

The good news is there have been no confirmed cases of Covid-19 in Pecos County. As a town along Interstate 10, Fort Stockton welcomes travelers from all over the country (and occasionally the world) and may at some point see cases of the disease in the near future.

As a medical community, PCMH has implemented the following to decrease the spread of the disease:

- We have been in daily contact with the state health department about any updates in testing or new cases in the area
- PCMH clinics will see well visits in the morning from 9:00 – 11:00 AM and sick visits in the afternoon from 1:30 – 3:30 PM to try to limit interactions of the sick with the well.
- Non-urgent scheduled visits for lab results or med refills can be rescheduled for next month or a phone visit can be performed.

- The inpatient hospital will be implementing a no visitor policy
- Current recommendations for testing are based on the CDC and state Health Department guidelines and are limited to those with fever, cough/shortness of breath AND close contact with a confirmed case of Covid-19 or travel to an area with ongoing transmission of the disease.
- **IF YOU HAVE A FEVER OR COUGH, DO NOT PRESENT TO CLINIC OR THE ER INITIALLY.** We urge you to **call your PCPs office** and a triage nurse or physician will review your case. They will determine if you may come to clinic to be evaluated, OR if suspicion for Covid-19 is high, the ER will be contacted and you will be asked to present to the ER parking lot and medical personnel will meet you in the parking lot. If it is **after clinic hours, call the ER directly** prior to arriving.
- You will be asked to **wear a mask upon presenting to clinic or the ER if you have any respiratory symptoms.** It is also prudent to wear a mask anywhere in public if you have a cough. **If you have no symptoms, a mask is not necessary.**
- If you have a respiratory illness and don't meet criteria for Covid-19 testing, it may be prudent to self-quarantine at your house for 14 days to prevent the spread of disease.
- If you need a work excuse, you may call clinic and excuses can be emailed or faxed to your employer.
- **PCMH supports the CDC's March 15th decision to postpone/cancel gatherings of 50 or more people for the next 8 weeks**
- **PCMH also supports the White House's March 16th recommendation of avoiding gatherings of 10 or more people for the next 15 days**
- As previously stated, people 65 years or older and/or people with medical issues like heart disease, diabetes, cancer or a weakened immune system are at a higher risk for severe symptoms of Covid-19. They are urged to stay home as much as possible and to be vigilant when out in public.

Below are everyday precautions to avoid acquiring any illnesses such colds, influenza and Covid-19:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- **Wash your hands often with soap and water** for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing, or having been in a public place.
- If soap and water are not available, use a **hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.**
- **To the extent possible, avoid touching high-touch surfaces in public places** – elevator buttons, door handles, handrails, handshaking with people, etc. Use a tissue or your sleeve to cover your hand or finger if you must touch something.
- Wash your hands after touching surfaces in public places.
- **Avoid touching your face,** nose, eyes, mouth etc.
- **Clean and disinfect** your home to remove germs: practice routine cleaning of frequently touched surfaces (for example: tables, doorknobs, light switches, handles, desks, toilets, faucets, sinks & cell phones)

- **Avoid crowds.** Your risk of exposure to respiratory viruses like COVID-19 may increase in crowded, closed-in settings with little air circulation if there are people in the crowd who are sick. As of March 15th, the CDC now recommends cancelling/postponing/avoiding any gatherings of 50 or more people for the next 8 weeks and as of March 16th the White House recommends avoiding gatherings of 10 or more people for the next 15 days.
- **Avoid all non-essential travel** including plane trips, cruise ships or other non-essential public transportation

Thank you for your time in reading this. Pecos County Memorial Hospital wishes you and your families all the best. God Bless.

Sincerely,

Auden Velasquez, MD