

**POLK COUNTY, TEXAS
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Time: 10:00 a.m.

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Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

There has been much discussion of the spread of the new Coronavirus COVID-19 in the news and on social media over the past few months. We want the residents of Polk County to know that all levels of government, medical, and public health professionals have been working to put plans and processes into action to prevent and control the spread of the virus, as well as to test patients for the virus and provide patient care. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has provided guidance to hospitals, healthcare professionals, and travelers, and is also sending guidance to schools and law enforcement.

In 2014, the Texas Task Force on Infectious Disease Preparedness was created to provide expert, evidence-based assessments, protocols, and recommendations related to state responses to infectious disease, as well as serve as a source of information and education. This task force includes representatives from state agencies and experts in infectious disease, emergency management, and public health preparedness and response.

The Texas Task Force on Infectious Disease Preparedness and Response has been briefed by the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) officials on COVID-19 as response and planning continues to protect Texas health.

The Angelina County & Cities Health District covers disease surveillance in Polk County. The Polk County Office of Emergency Management and the Angelina County & Cities Health District will continue to monitor the COVID-19 outbreak and provide guidance and information to the public.

What you can do to prevent COVID-19

There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19. The best way to prevent infection is to take precautions to avoid exposure to this virus, which are similar to the precautions you take to avoid the flu. The Texas Department of State Health Services always recommends these everyday actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. 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.

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Follow the CDC’s recommendations for using a facemask (see below):
 - The CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19.
 - Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. The use of facemasks is also crucial for health workers and people who are taking care of someone in close settings (at home or in a health care facility).

For more information on COVID-19, visit www.dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus or visit the CDC’s Frequently Asked Questions page at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html> to learn more about COVID-19.

To learn more about the Texas Task Force on Infectious Disease Preparedness and Response visit: www.dshs.state.tx.us/TaskForceID.

Please look for further updates on the Polk County Emergency Management Facebook page (www.facebook.com/PolkCountyEmergencyManagement) or on our website at www.PolkCountyOEM.com.