

Charlotte County update for 3/11/20

## **Education and precautions key to COVID-19 response**

By Hector Flores, Charlotte County administrator

Charlotte County is monitoring Department of Health updates for local, regional and state COVID-19 cases, including the case reported in Charlotte County Saturday. Dr. Joe Pepe, the director of the Charlotte County office of the Department of Health and Scott Pritchard from the DOH Department of Epidemiology provided an update to the County Commission at its Tuesday meeting.

“This virus has shown a propensity to spread and is difficult to contain. The next phase of this is community mitigation. We need to do everything we can to take measures every day to contain the spread of the disease,” Pritchard said.

Pepe emphasized the need for people to be informed and calm.

“Many people with COVID-19 recover at home and they’re not hospitalized,” Pepe said, before listing precautions people should take in addition to good personal hygiene. “If you have travelled internationally in the last 14 days, work with your medical providers and self-isolate. We’re asking people to avoid contact with others if they’re sick. We’re asking people not to travel if they’re sick. Delay travel if at all possible. If you are well and you are not around someone who is sick it is not necessary to wear a mask. We’re trying to preserve those masks for those who need it.”

My administration colleagues and I met Tuesday afternoon with senior staff to discuss potential policy implications and responses to COVID-19. We’re committed to ensuring our employees and the public with whom we interact stay informed and stay safe as we navigate this situation.

Emergency Management staff are communicating regularly with the Department of Health and senior county leadership. The Emergency Operations Center is at a Level 3 status, which means we’re prepared to activate the EOC as required.

Charlotte County Community Services sanitized its recreation centers and libraries last week and has initiated daily end-of-day cleaning. Facilities staff is wiping down surfaces in the County Administration Center and the Justice Center every day. Information about COVID-19 has been shared with all county employees. We participate in weekly conference calls with other county leaders and the Division of Emergency Management through the Florida Association of Counties to stay current on best practices and evolving circumstances.

The county’s website and social media portals provide a link (<http://charlotte.floridahealth.gov/>) for the latest COVID-19 information and personal hygiene tips. Visit CharlotteCountyFL.gov and click the banner at the top of the page or click Coronavirus COVID-19 under Hot Topics.

The Tampa Bay Rays are following Centers for Disease Control guidance on Charlotte Sports Park cleaning protocols, including cleaning high-traffic areas with disinfectant several times per day – before, during, and after events; installing hand sanitizers stations; and displaying infection prevention messages throughout the stadium.

Keep in mind, the same hygiene precautions health professionals are advising are the same ones that protect us from getting the flu or other infectious diseases.

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