

Island Boards of Health, Emergency Managers, Hospital and School representatives are working together to provide the latest update regarding a new Coronavirus called COVID-19, first identified in Wuhan, China, in December 2019, as well as to highlight the plans in place in our community to address any local implications of this virus.

Island towns have been preparing for emerging infectious diseases for many years. While COVID-19 is a new virus, the coordination, communication efforts, and infrastructure around our public health preparedness are firmly in place.

To date, there has been one confirmed case and 2 presumptive cases of COVID-19 in the state. According to the [Massachusetts Department of Public Health](#) (MDPH), the risk to the public from COVID-19 remains low. Island Boards of Health are receiving regular updates from MDPH and the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) on this rapidly evolving situation. The Health Departments and Emergency Managers are in regular contact with other town officials, Martha's Vineyard Hospital and Martha's Vineyard Public Schools to discuss status reports, directives and messaging for the community. In addition, we are participating in webinars hosted by MDPH, which offer updates and guidance for local health departments, school officials and other stakeholders in the community.

We are asking public and private businesses to help "spread" helpful hygiene and sanitization measures, by providing hand sanitizer, handi-wipes and signage to reinforce prevention strategies, including reminding sick employees to stay home. The Health Departments will also be contacting food establishments and providers to reinforce these messages.

Martha's Vineyard Plan to Address COVID-19

The Island Towns have an Emergency Preparedness plan in place that encompasses assessment and response to likely public health threats (including pandemics) and other all-hazard emergencies that might affect the community.

This plan outlines the key stakeholders that would be consulted with to form action plans and work collaboratively with including Boards of Health, Emergency Managers, EMS, representatives from the Boards of Selectmen, Town Administrators, Police, Fire, Schools, Councils on Aging, Public Works Departments, Martha's Vineyard Hospital, Island Health Clinics, Red Cross and others as needed.

Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) and Other Volunteers – Island residents with medical expertise, as well as those with non-medical experience, who assist at flu clinics and other public health and wellness events. These volunteers are trained (using the national Incident Command System) in their likely roles in a public health emergency. If COVID-19 adversely affects the Island in the near future, MRC and other volunteers may be deployed to assist in addressing the virus.

The Towns are continuing to monitor this situation, prepare information to keep Island residents informed, and provide any response that may be needed.

What Can You Do?

There are steps you can take to avoid coming into contact with viruses such as COVID-19 and Influenza (which is rampant at this time). Remember, it's not too late to get your flu shot.

There is currently no vaccine to prevent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. However, as a reminder, CDC always recommends everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases, including:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- 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 CDC's recommendations for using a facemask.
 - 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 a close setting](#) people who are taking care of someone in close settings (at home or in a health care facility).
- 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 readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.

For information about handwashing, see CDC's [CDC's handwashing](#) website

For information specific to healthcare, see [CDC's Hand Hygiene in Healthcare Settings](#)

These are everyday habits that can help prevent the spread of several viruses. CDC does have [specific guidance for travelers](#)

Resources for More Information

Island Health Departments:

Aquinnah aquinnahboardofhealth@comcast.net

Chilmark boh@chilmarkma.gov

Edgartown mpoole@edgartown-ma.us

Oak Bluffs mlancaster@oakbluffsma.gov

Tisbury mvalley@tisburyma.gov

West Tisbury boh@westtisbury-ma.gov

Island Public Schools: <http://box451.temp.domains/~mvypsorg/Staging/>

MA Department of Public Health <https://www.mass.gov/guides/information-on-theoutbreak-of-2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/summary.html>

World Health Organization: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novelcoronavirus-2019>

Please refer to the Town websites and these resources for continued updates on the Coronavirus.