



From the OFFICE of the GOVERNOR

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Gov. Edwards Confirms Louisiana's First Presumptive Positive Case of COVID-19

BATON ROUGE —The Louisiana Department of Health has reported Louisiana’s first presumptive positive case of COVID-19, commonly referred to as coronavirus, a Jefferson Parish resident who is hospitalized in Orleans Parish, Gov. John Bel Edwards announced Monday. At this time, there is only one known case of the illness in the state.

The Governor will discuss this in his planned Opening Legislative Session remarks at 1 p.m. and will be joined by public health officials for a media conference in the Governor’s Press Room on the Fourth Floor of the State Capitol at 3:30 p.m. The Governor’s remarks will be streamed at [Facebook.com/LouisianaGov](https://www.facebook.com/LouisianaGov)

Gov. Edwards said, “While today is the first time that we can confirm that we have a presumptive positive coronavirus case, Louisiana has been preparing for this moment for many weeks. The CDC still believes the risk to the general public is low, but we will work quickly and decisively to assess the risk to those around this patient.”

“Encouragingly, we were able to test this patient due to recently broadened criteria,” said Stephen Russo, Interim Secretary of the Louisiana Department of Health. “It’s critical to be able to catch COVID-19 early to prevent spread in our communities.”

“Now together we all—as a government, as health care systems and providers, as schools, businesses and as neighbors—must take action and be vigilant to prevent the spread of this virus in our great state,” Gov. Edwards said.

NEXT STEPS

Louisiana will send the presumptive positive test to the CDC for final confirmation of COVID-19. Because of the reliability of the test, Louisiana will move forward as if the test is an actual positive and take actions to contain the illness and assess the risk of spread.

The Office of Public Health’s epidemiology team will begin an investigation of people who have come in close contact with the patient, including health care workers, to determine the risk of spread.

OPH will administer additional COVID-19 tests to determine if more people have been infected. Some people at risk may be quarantined for 14 days, even if their initial test is not positive.

LOUISIANA'S RESPONSE

Public health officials have been in close contact with the CDC and health providers since January, as the COVID-19 outbreak grew in China.

Gov. Edwards established Louisiana's COVID-19 Task Force to lead Louisiana's planning for different scenarios relating to the spread of coronavirus. It will offer guidance not only to the Governor and the Unified Command Group, but also to state agencies, local governments, businesses and organizations.

Members of the COVID-19 Task Force include the Louisiana Department of Health and the Office of Public Health, the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness, the Division of Administration, the Department of Education, the Louisiana National Guard, the Department of Children and Family Services, the Louisiana Department of Justice, the United States Coast Guard, 211, Louisiana State Police and other agencies as deemed appropriate.

As an initial step, the COVID-19 Task Force is recommending that all state agencies review and update their Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP) that were developed statewide in 2012 under GOHSEP direction to take coronavirus into account.

ADVICE FOR THE PUBLIC

State officials encourage Louisianans to take the following proactive steps to protect the health of themselves and those around them:

- Cover your cough.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and water, or with a hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Disinfect frequently touched surfaces.
- Avoiding close contact (within six feet) with those who are sick.

Symptoms can include fever, cough and shortness of breath or difficulty breathing. CDC believes at this time that symptoms of COVID-19 may appear in as few as two days or as long as 14 days after exposure.

FOR INFORMATION

- For updates on the state's response to the coronavirus situation, visit [LDH.louisiana.gov/Coronavirus](https://ldh.louisiana.gov/Coronavirus).

- Members of the public with questions about coronavirus may call the coronavirus general information line at 1-855-523-2652 from 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

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