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## **Gov. Edwards Holds Unified Command Group Meeting on Coronavirus, Forms COVID-19 Task Force**

**BATON ROUGE** — Gov. John Bel Edwards presided over Louisiana’s first Unified Command Group meeting about the state’s response to the coronavirus(COVID-19) on Monday and announced the creation of a COVID-19 Task Force of key state and federal officials. **Currently, there are no confirmed cases of coronavirus in Louisiana.**

The Governor also announced that the Louisiana Office of Public Health’s State Laboratory is now able to test for the virus in state, using the testing guidelines provided by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The CDC does expect community spread of coronavirus in some parts of the United States. Currently there are more than 60 cases confirmed elsewhere in the country and two people in America have died. While the United States is not seeing the same level of spread as other countries, Louisiana has been preparing since the COVID-19 outbreak in mainland China.

“While we currently do not have any confirmed cases of coronavirus in Louisiana, we do anticipate that we will in the future. That’s why Louisiana’s Department of Health and other agencies have been planning for several weeks on how the state will respond to prevent the spread of the virus and protect the health of the public,” Gov. Edwards said. “As a state, Louisiana has been planning for pandemics for 15 years, and we will use this experience to guide how we react and respond to the coronavirus, should it impact our state. For now, people should take commonsense steps to protect themselves from respiratory illness, including washing their hands, covering their mouths when they cough and avoiding going out in public when they are sick.”

- Gov. Edwards will address coronavirus as part of his remarks at the Baton Rouge Press Club around noon today. His remarks will be streamed at [Facebook.com/LouisianaGov](https://www.facebook.com/LouisianaGov).

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.

The COVID-19 Task Force will 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.

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.

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

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