



# OFFICE OF GOVERNOR STEVE SISOLAK

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**March 12, 2020**

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## **Gov. Sisolak Declares State of Emergency in Response to COVID-19**

Las Vegas, NV – Today, Governor Steve Sisolak held a press conference to announce that he has issued a Declaration of Emergency in the State of Nevada.

“Protecting Nevadans’ public health and safety is my top priority, and this declaration will give our State additional tools and flexibility to respond to this rapidly developing situation and advance measures to mitigate and ultimately contain COVID-19,” **said Gov. Sisolak.** “As part of our emergency declaration, I ordered the activation of the State Emergency Operations Center and our Nevada Health Response team, which will be leading our fight against COVID-19 and exploring ways to mitigate the impacts to our State and its citizens. ”

You can watch the full press briefing here:

<https://twitter.com/GovSisolak/status/1238265289512386560>.

The Governor also announced the creation of the new “Nevada Health Response” website, which was created in close coordination with the Nevada Department of Health and Human Services, to provide up-to-date information, guidance, and news pertaining to COVID-19. You can access the website here: <https://nvhealthresponse.nv.gov/>.

The Governor’s prepared remarks from the press conference are as follows:

Hello, everyone, and thanks for joining us today.

I'd first like to extend my thoughts and prayers to the victims, families, and friends who have been impacted by COVID-19. This has been a challenging time for all of us, but I just want you to know how much I appreciate your patience and your strength.

I'd also like to thank all our local, State, federal, and tribal partners for diligently working around the clock to monitor, inform, and take preventative steps to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 in our State.

I'd also like to provide an update on the current number of COVID-19 cases in Nevada. We are now at 11 total – including both presumptive and confirmed cases.

- o As of 10am this morning, the Southern Nevada Health District has reported 1 confirmed and 7 presumptive positive cases,
- o As of today, Washoe County Health District has reported 1 confirmed and 1 presumptive positive case.
- o And as of this afternoon, Carson City Health and Human Services has announced its first presumptive positive case.

As we all have seen, this situation is rapidly developing and could change very quickly.

I know there are a lot of concerned Nevadans out there tonight, but I can assure you that we're doing everything we can to ensure that our State is working to take on this challenge.

In that vein, I have signed and issued a Declaration of Emergency that will give our State some additional tools and flexibility to respond quickly to this rapidly developing situation. This Declaration is an important tool that will advance measures to mitigate and ultimately contain COVID-19.

I want to stress that declaring a state of emergency – while certainly a mark of the seriousness with which we're taking this effort – is not a reason to panic.

This declaration is the first step to opening up access to our State's emergency resources. And it helps the State of Nevada loosen up the regulatory environment, fostering continued and stronger coordination between State and local government agencies and allowing us to maximize our collaboration and avoid duplication of efforts.

Our office has already been proactive on this effort. We currently host daily statewide meetings with local health districts and state agencies to provide updates, identify needs, and implement necessary response plans.

And we are in constant contact with our federal delegation and agencies to continue fighting to gain the resources our State needs.

But, at this time, it has become clear that an extra step is necessary in order to meet the moment. To ensure the public health and safety of our citizens, and to ensure we have resources at our disposal to immediately and aggressively respond, this is what our State must do.

This emergency declaration also orders the activation of the State Emergency Operations Center and our Nevada Health Response team, which will be leading our fight against COVID-19 and exploring ways to mitigate the impacts to our State and our citizens.

This emergency team will work with stakeholders across the State to coordinate our efforts so that we can avoid duplication of labor and freely exchange information

I have directed this team to work with the Nevada Tribal Emergency Coordinating Council to ensure that Nevada's tribes are at the table.

The emergency declaration also loosens regulations with respect to emergency purchases for food, supplies, services, and equipment.

And it reinforces the Nevada Attorney General's Office explicit authority under our consumer protection laws to investigate and go after anyone who attempts to take advantage of our citizens and exploit their fears.

This measure is not something I take lightly, but it is my sworn duty as Governor to protect our citizens, and it is what we need going forward.

As part of our Nevada Health Response effort, we have also created a website that provides a central, state-wide hub for individuals, businesses, and organizations looking for the most recent federal and Nevada-specific guidance and resources to make informed decisions surrounding this rapidly developing situation.

It will also include a centralized hub for all news and press releases related to COVID-19 in the State of Nevada. [POINT TO WEBSITE ON SCREEN]

All Nevadans can visit this website at [www.NVHealthResponse.NV.Gov](http://www.NVHealthResponse.NV.Gov)

It is absolutely critical that Nevadans and visitors are able to quickly and easily access the most accurate and up-to-date information possible in our State so they can take precautionary measures for themselves, their families, and their organizations – and this new site gives them that reassurance.

I'd now like to talk about our work with schools in Nevada. The safety and well-being of our students is one of my absolute top priorities. That's why I've been working closely with our State Superintendent to put out extensive guidance for our school districts across the state as this situation continues to evolve.

Additionally, our two largest school districts are already taking strong action to protect the health of their students and staff. I know these decisions were difficult and not taken lightly, but they are important for the health of our communities, and I appreciate their proactive leadership. These actions include:

- o Cancelling district and school-sponsored athletics, extra-curricular and academic-related activities until further notice;
- o Placing restrictions on international and out-of-state student travel;
- o Increasing the cleaning in schools; and
- o Most importantly, strongly encouraging students or staff members who are feeling sick to stay home.

Both districts have established websites with more information for parents, students and staff.

If cases develop in other districts across the state, the impacted districts should strongly consider similar actions tailored to their local communities.

I know many of you are seeing a lot of news on what schools districts and states around the country are doing in response to COVID-19, but we are looking at the State of Nevada and the unique communities throughout our State.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to how we address this issue, and this is a rapidly developing situation that we will continue to monitor. All options are on the table to ensure the safety of our kids.

I also know it's critical to issue guidance for Nevada's high-risk populations.

If you are older adult or a Nevadan with an underlying serious or long-term medical condition, please take additional actions to reduce your risk of getting sick with this disease.

I strongly urge you to:

- o Do an inventory check—gather extra supplies such as soap, tissue, alcohol-based hand sanitizer, and basic pantry staples. Make sure your prescriptions are up to date and talk to your healthcare provider about having extra necessary medications on hand;
- o Make plans if your caregiver gets sick;
- o Check in with your work about sick leave and telework options; and
- o Make a list of emergency contacts to have on hand—family, friends, neighbors, carpool drivers, health care providers, teachers, employers, local public health department and community resources.

Be extra vigilant about normal everyday precautions to try to avoid getting sick:

- o Avoid people who are sick and wash your hands often; and
- o Avoid crowds, large-scale events, and mass gatherings -- especially in poorly ventilated spaces.

Additionally, Nevadans in our long-term care, nursing homes, assisted living, skilled nursing, and residential care facilities are particularly vulnerable to this disease. The following guidance, some of which is currently posted online, and some of which will be updated and released tomorrow, is focused on protecting the health and safety of our elderly – our parents, grandparents, and other loved ones.

The guidance directs long-term care, nursing homes, assisted living, skilled nursing, and residential care facilities, to:

- o Restrict visitation to only essential individuals
- o Support residents' access to socialization when visitors are not able to enter the facility through virtual visits;
- o Limit essential visitors to two per resident at a given time;
- o Record and document the screenings for all visitors;
- o Screen all permitted visitors for respiratory or other symptoms potentially indicating COVID-19 and for recent travel to an affected geographic area or high-risk setting prior to entering the facilities; and
- o Limit community outings;

As always, local health districts should be contacted immediately if a facility has questions, sees an increase in respiratory illnesses or suspects a resident has COVID-19. Additionally, facilities must:

Effectively communicate with patients and their families to form a mutual understanding of their individual needs and goals of the care you provide;

- o Ensure frequent monitoring for symptoms of respiratory infection;
- o Prepare staff to improve infection control and prevention practices by conducting trainings using resources and information provided by the CDC, CMS, and NV DHHS.

I want to thank the long-term care providers in Nevada who are on the front lines caring for our citizens and following their infection prevention plans.

Their actions, along with the guidance shared today, will help limit risk exposure. It is not lost on me that some of these restrictions are not ideal for residents and family members, but they are critical to ensure older and medically vulnerable Nevadans remain safe.

I know you all still have questions – and so do I. But here’s one thing I do know-- Nevadans deserve a Governor who will be honest with them, and that’s exactly what I’m going to do throughout this situation.

I understand your frustration. The lack of information or the misinformation that’s being communicated (or not being communicated) from the federal agencies is infuriating. But I’m not just sitting here stewing.

I’m working with our federal delegation to try and get answers, and in the meantime, we have been working nonstop to take action and identify solutions for our state in what has become an unprecedented situation. We are in uncharted territory.

I know there has been a lot of discussion about mass gatherings and large scale events. I have no doubt that this is something we need to act on, but I’m not going to arbitrarily pick a number out of a hat. When this decision is made, it will be based on how we best mitigate and contain the spread of COVID-19.

That’s why I have formed a team of medical experts, that will be led by Dr. Azzam, Nevada’s Chief Medical Officer. This group has been directed to provide me with an assessment and recommendations on social distancing, and I look forward to working with them on this critical measure.

I’m also asking them to help identify more information on symptom that we can share with the public so you all can better assess next steps.

I know there have also been a lot questions about Nevada's capacity to test for COVID-19.

I want to be clear: I believe getting more people tested is one of the only ways we can determine the extent of what we are dealing with.

Our ability to test comes down to capacity – in every meaning of the word: The number of test kits we have, the laboratory equipment to test more, and the personnel – the men and women working around the clock in this state to collect specimens and process these tests.

These individuals are on the front line of this fight and they are the epitome of good public servants. I am communicating our needs across the board – tests for the labs, medical supplies and equipment, protective gear, and additional funding.

These needs are changing constantly, every day. I remain a hopeful partner with our Federal Government, but promises must be kept – and quite frankly, I am tired of waiting. Our requests for support and resources from the federal government need to be swiftly met.

I will take some questions, but know this, this is a very fluid situation.

We have been on this 24-7 for several weeks- working with local health authorities, our federal delegation, and other medical professionals.

We are confronted with different and unique challenges not just every day, but multiple times a day.

Today's action is just the first of a series of actions that will come from my office and our partners over the coming days and weeks.

Thank you for being here.

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