Minnesota confirms first case of COVID-19

Ramsey County woman who took cruise is first case in Minnesota

The Minnesota Department of Health has confirmed Minnesota's first presumptive case of the novel coronavirus COVID-19, it announced on Friday, March 6.

The case is an older adult resident of Ramsey County who recently traveled on a cruise ship with a known COVID-19 case. The patient began to develop symptoms on Tuesday, Feb. 25, and sought health care on Thursday, March 5. The test was found positive on Friday, March 6, and the Minnesota Department of Health is awaiting confirmatory testing from CDC, but health officials consider the presumptive results actionable. The patient is currently in quarantine at home and is recovering.

"The State of Minnesota has been working around the clock to prepare for this, and I am confident that our Department of Health is up to the challenge," said Gov. Tim Walz. "Our state is fortunate to have a strong public health sector and world-class health care providers who are working hard to keep Minnesotans safe and healthy."

Minnesota Commissioner of Health Jan Malcolm said the appearance of the virus in Minnesota has been expected. "State and local public health officials are working hard to slow the spread of this virus and protect Minnesotans, but based on how the outbreak has developed elsewhere we need to be prepared for some level of community spread," Malcolm said. "It is critical that all of us do our part to slow the spread of this virus by covering coughs, washing hands, and staying home when sick with cold or flu-like symptoms. We also need to prepare for community mitigation measures like telework arrangements and temporary school closures should they become necessary."

The virus that causes COVID-19 is spread by respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes, similar to how flu and other respiratory diseases spread, or when people touch contaminated surfaces, and then touch their eyes, nose, or mouth. "The most important thing Minnesotans can do right now to help protect themselves, their families, and their communities is to take those tried-and-true, everyday steps to prevent respiratory illnesses," Ehresmann said, such as:

•Covering your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or into your sleeve, and then throwing the tissue in the trash.

•Washing your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom or before eating. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60-percent alcohol.

•Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.

•Stay home if you have cold or flu-like symptoms, and avoid close contact with people who are sick.

As of Monday, March 9, according to the Minnesota Department of Health, there are two confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the state.