

Media Release:

March 29, 2020

Buncombe County Reports First COVID-19 Fatality

Buncombe County Health and Human Services (BCHHS) is reporting the first COVID-19 associated death in a Buncombe County resident. The elderly individual died from complications associated with the virus on March 28, 2020 at Mission Hospital. To protect the privacy of the family, no further information about this patient will be released by BCHHS.

“Our thoughts are with the family at this time. COVID-19 can be a serious illness, especially for the elderly or those with underlying health problems. All of us must do our part to protect ourselves, our friends and family, our neighbors, and the most vulnerable in our community,” said Interim Public Health Director, Dr. Jennifer Mullendore.

“With COVID-19 spreading in our area, it is absolutely critical that we each reduce our chances of getting or passing on this illness. As much as possible, we should stay at home, away from people with whom we do not live. This is especially important for people at high risk for serious illness from COVID-19.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) people at high risk for severe medical consequences, including death, include anyone who:

- Is 65 years of age or older
- Has a high-risk condition that includes:
 - chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma
 - heart disease with complications
 - weakened immune system
 - severe obesity - body mass index (BMI) of 40 or higher
 - other underlying medical conditions, particularly if not well controlled, such as diabetes, kidney failure or liver disease
 - pregnancy - pregnant women should be followed closely by their healthcare providers since they are known to be at risk for severe viral illness.

Buncombe County and all of its municipalities have issued an order to Stay Home, Stay Safe for all people in Buncombe County. It is imperative that we all comply with the directives of the order, which include no gatherings of any number of people outside of a single household or living unit for any reason and strict guidance to eliminate all non-essential travel, services, or exposure to people outside of your immediate family unit.

At this time, there are a total of 19 lab-confirmed positive COVID-19 cases, including one fatality, in Buncombe County.

COVID-19 is a major health and safety issue for everyone, everywhere. During this global pandemic, it is important that we recognize how stressful this situation is for many people and that we take the time to check in on our individual levels of stress and to check on each other. It will take compassion and dedication from each of us to slow the spread of COVID-19 in Buncombe County.

For the most up-to-date information on COVID-19 in Buncombe County, visit buncombeready.org or text BCALERT to 888-777. For information on COVID-19 in North Carolina, visit ncdhhs.gov/coronavirus or text COVIDNC to 898211.

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