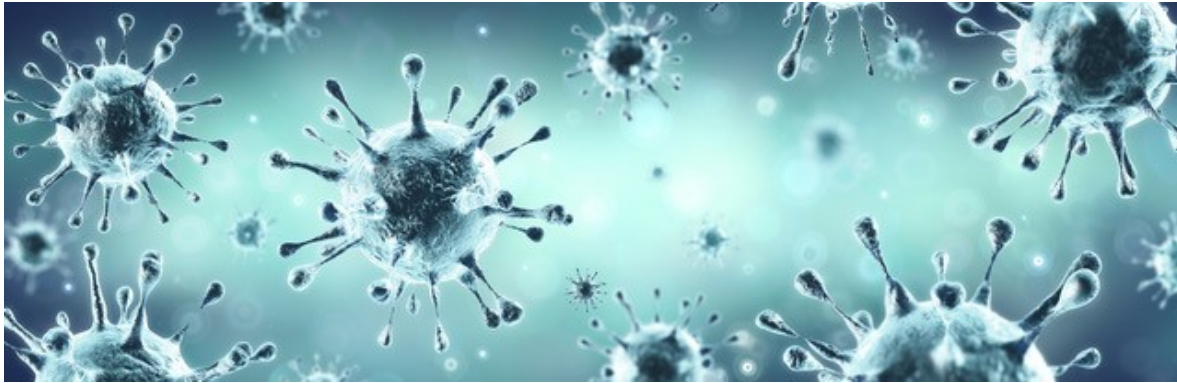**From the OC Health Care Agency (March 2 2020)**

The County of Orange has declared a local emergency and a local health emergency to prepare for COVID-19, commonly known as novel coronavirus.

As of Monday, public health officials in Orange County are now able to test for coronavirus in patients exhibiting symptoms of the contagious disease amid fears of a local outbreak.

The Orange County Health Care Agency said tests would be administered to anyone with the flu-like symptoms of COVID-19 who in the last two weeks has been in contact with other virus patients or who has traveled in areas where outbreaks have occurred.

Testing could also be done for patients hospitalized for fever and a lower respiratory illness that's "otherwise unexplained," HCA officials said on Twitter.

The health agency warned residents that the testing performed at its laboratory in Santa Ana must be requested by their doctors or other health care providers.

The declaration of both a local emergency and local health emergency assists the County of Orange to better leverage resources in order to prepare to our staffing needs and greater agency coordination all while allowing for future reimbursement for County activities by state and federal governments in the event of an COVID-19 outbreak in Orange County.

"This decision from the County did not come lightly," said Vice Chairman Andrew Do, First District. "This is a measured and prudent response in preparation for the possibility of a COVID-19 outbreak in Orange County. The Board of Supervisors and county staff are working vigilantly to monitor and prepare all the resources at our County's disposal to ensure the safety and well-being for all of Orange County's residents and visitors."

While there has been only one confirmed case in Orange County and that individual has recovered, the OC Health Care Agency continues to engage and monitor the rapidly changing worldwide response to COVID-19.

"With 60 U.S. cases of coronavirus, we are facing a real-life crisis that must be managed. I support an emergency declaration, not because I necessarily believe the public is in more danger, but because the federal and state governments refuse to give us enough information to discharge our public health responsibilities," said Supervisor Donald P. Wagner. "Orange County is a major tourist destination with a robust business sector, the sheer number of visitors and residents traveling to and from Orange County is significant. We want to be vigilant in ensuring the County is prepared and has sufficient resources to prevent and combat any possible outbreak of COVID-19."

Should more COVID-19 cases occur in Orange County, the OC Health Care Agency (HCA) would share that information with community members and medical providers, and colleagues at the California Department of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"Our utmost concern is for the health and welfare of all Orange County residents and visitors alike," said Supervisor Doug Chaffee, Fourth District. "The County of Orange will use all of its resources to ensure we are protected from any possible COVID-19 outbreaks."

County of Orange residents are encouraged to visit www.ochealthinfo.com/novelcoronavirus, call the OC Health Care Agency's Health Referral Line from Monday – Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at 1 (800) 564- 8448, and monitor social media channels to ensure they have the most accurate and up to date information related to COVID-19.

"Orange County residents need to take the proper precautions to ensure their health and welfare are protected at all times," said Supervisor Lisa Bartlett, Fifth District. "The best way to receive the most up to date information on how to stay healthy and safe locally is to follow our OC Health Care Agency on Twitter and Facebook."