



Cayman Islands Government

Statement to the Legislative Assembly

by the

Honourable Dwayne Seymour JP, MLA

**Minister for Health, Environment, Culture
and Housing**

Update on the Coronavirus

31st January 2020

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Update on the Coronavirus

The Ministry of Health has been watching closely and with concern the spread of the 2019 novel coronavirus acute respiratory disease, also known as 2019-nCoV. The Ministry has been in close communication with the Pan American Health Organisation, the Caribbean Public Health Agency and Public Health England, all of whom are providing regular recommendations, updates and web based meetings. A Public Health alert was issued on 22nd January and a Public Health travel advisory was issued on 30th January. The World Health Organisation declared yesterday that this coronavirus outbreak is a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.

All registered practitioners have been provided with information on this Public Health threat through the Department of Health Regulatory Services.

The Department of Public Health held a multisectoral meeting on Wednesday 29th January (rescheduled following the earthquake) and amongst the attendees were senior members of Customs and Border Control, the Port Authority, the Airports Authority, Ministry of Tourism and staff from across the Health Services Authority. Plans for managing arriving passengers and people who may be at risk from the novel coronavirus were discussed in detail. Additionally, plans for transferring and managing patients who require hospital care were also discussed. The Department of Public Health is communicating with Cayman Airways offering support and advice.

Officials have been in contact with the cruise ship industry and have been informed that the cruise ships are conducting screening on all joining passengers. It is also reassuring to know that travellers who are coming from China are being screened on arrival in the USA, Canada, the UK and beyond.

Highly visible information for arriving passengers will be placed at the ports within days. The Customs and Border officers are already screening all arriving passengers for travel histories to China who will be notified to the department of Public Health. Public Health will then monitor these people for the incubation period and support their healthcare needs as necessary.

The Public is reminded to “be in the know” about 2019-nCoV (the 2019 novel coronavirus). This virus is one of a family of corona viruses which include one causing the common cold. However, this particular strain has not been characterised before. In any travel abroad, the Public is advised to practice general infection control measures such as:

- frequent hand cleansing with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- covering nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing
- avoiding close contact with people suffering from acute respiratory infections.

Masks will be placed at the entrances to clinics across the islands for people with respiratory symptoms to use so they can reduce the chance of any spread of infection to others when they enter the clinic.

The Health Services Authority is taking forward plans to increase its response capacity to this health concern which will include sourcing additional equipment and supplies. Private healthcare providers are also on the alert and able to support the response as necessary.

The National Security Council is meeting early next week and will consider whether travel restrictions may be in the National interest and any further action deemed necessary.