

Joint Information Release



Media Contacts

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Blount County, Tennessee - The governments of Blount County, the cities of Maryville, Alcoa, Friendsville and Townsend, and the towns of Rockford and Louisville are monitoring the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) outbreak and are coordinating our efforts to mitigate the spread of the virus in our community. Public facilities including parks and recreation, schools, library, and government buildings are included in the mitigation protocol.

Blount County Mayor Ed Mitchell states, "Our local mayors are in constant contact. I can say with confidence that I, along with Maryville Mayor Tom Taylor, Alcoa Mayor Clint Abbott, Louisville Mayor Tom Bickers, Rockford Mayor Carl Koella, Townsend Mayor Ron Palewski, and Friendsville Mayor Andy Lawhorn, all want our citizens to enjoy life and go about their normal business. Our Blount County families need to take the same precautions we already do during normal flu season. Our government preparation and contingency planning is done with the well-being of all our employees and citizens in mind. We have faith in our health department and their recommendations. We know that our hospital is also prepared and with a plan of action that best serves all of Blount County. This is a very fluid process and we will continue to take any necessary precautions to combat the spread of COVID-19 within our community."

Community-based interventions such as school dismissals or temporary closures, event cancellations, and employee remote work planning may be considered as we continue to monitor the spread of the virus. Decisions of this nature will be made locally with consult from state and federal officials as appropriate. In some cases, decisions may be made on a state level based on the scope of the outbreak and severity of illness.

Implementation of these actions will require extensive community engagement, and we will work to provide ongoing and transparent public health information as it becomes available from our health department, hospital, state and CDC resources. Blount Memorial Hospital has implemented its procedures and is at the ready to support the community as the disease moves through our area.

"The most important thing to remember is that this effort will only be effective if every individual in our community does their part," said Robert Schmidt, Blount County Health Department Director. "We cannot impede the spread of this disease effectively without each person's assistance. Individuals should practice everyday prevention measures, which are the best methods to control the spread of the disease."

To keep our community informed, [this site](#) has been established for the public to find contact information for local governments, schools and public facilities. News and information will also be distributed through our local media outlets.

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Background

The [Center for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) is responding to a respiratory disease by a novel (new) coronavirus. The virus has been named “coronavirus disease 2019” (abbreviated “COVID-19”).

According to the CDC, the virus is thought to spread mainly by person-to-person contact - between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).

Spread through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes, this virus can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.

As the COVID-19 affects communities throughout the United States, our own community is taking measures to reduce the spread of the disease. Our primary interest is to keep our community and all its members safe. Local governments, schools, and health and safety agencies will be working together to ensure we are taking all the necessary and available steps to be prepared for this virus and its effect on our community.