

Previous Press Release 3/12/20

At this time, the Stoneham Board of Health would like to make a statement regarding the recent emergence of the COVID-19 virus, also known as the Coronavirus. At 2pm on March 10, 2020 Gov. Charlie Baker issued a State of Emergency for the State of Massachusetts. The Town of Stoneham has taken proactive measures to disseminate pertinent information and educate the general public regarding the current spread of COVID-19. At this time, the total case count for the state of Massachusetts is 95, with 89 being presumptive, and 6 cases being confirmed by the CDC. 938 cases have been reported nation-wide as of March 11, 2020. No confirmed cases of COVID-19 have been reported in Stoneham at this time. Roughly half of the cases have been linked to a Biogen Conference in Boston's Seaport.

The Board of Health continues to monitor the emerging disease via conference calls with CDC, DPH, FEMA and MEMA. We have been working closely with LBOH's to discuss mitigation measures that are being recommended by the CDC. The Town of Stoneham will continue to issue up-to-date press releases to the general public via the Town's website. These releases have been issued by the Town's Emergency Management Department, Board of Health and School Superintendent regarding this matter.

COVID-19 has been classified as a flu-like upper respiratory disease affecting similar areas of the human body. Symptoms can include coughing, sneezing, runny nose and other classic symptoms of the flu. As with said flu, COVID-19 is most dangerous to high-risk populations such as the elderly, immunocompromised individuals and people with underlying health problems. The Board of Health advises heavy utilization of hand-washing, hand-sanitizers, proper sneezing techniques and the sterilization of high contact surfaces such as handrails, doorknobs, phones, and other common-sense areas. We implore all residents to be vigilant in doing their part to control the spread of the emerging virus. The death toll sits at 26 as of Tuesday, March 20th. By comparison, the CDC reports that in 2018, roughly 61,000 deaths were reported from classic influenza, with roughly 34,000 cases in 2019. So far in 2020, there have been a reported 8,200 deaths. Currently, classic influenza remains a far deadlier disease.

As a general disclaimer, although the use of proper techniques for handwashing and general sanitary practices has been mandated by the Board of Health, the use of personal protective equipment, such as masks, has not been mandated by federal, state or local health officials at this time, and the Board of Health will not be providing such materials to the general public. We ask that all residents of the Town of Stoneham utilize measures commonly associated with the prevention of the spread of classic influenza. We request that any resident exhibiting symptoms of this disease to self-isolate from the general public at this time.

The Town of Stoneham's website will be updated as new information is received as it relates to the Board of Health's actions regarding the virus. At this time, we have not mandated school closures, however, as an act of precaution, we will be suspending all activity at the Stoneham Senior Center until further notice as of 3/12/2020. The Board of Health has taken measures to sterilize all high-contact surfaces in all Town-owned buildings, and we implore private businesses to do the same. A guideline for proper surface sanitization techniques will be sent to all of the Town's food establishments and convenience stores, and said information will be made available to the general public on the Town's website.

The Board of Health reiterates its previous statement in imploring residents to stay vigilant, as one would with the spread of any disease, however, we ask that they avoid measures that could be deemed as extreme. Adequate handwashing, common sense sanitary procedures, self-isolation (if symptomatic) and a calm, objective approach to the situation will aid in ensuring the proper measures are being taken.

Further information will continue to be dispersed to local Boards of Health as new studies and reports are issued. If you have questions regarding this matter, please refer to the Town's website at Stoneham-MA.gov as all the latest information that is received by the Board of Health will immediately posted.