FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Mayor of the Unified Government Asks Residents to Follow Best Practices, Avoid Large Gatherings

Mayor David Alvey of the Unified Government of Wyandotte County/Kansas City, Kansas confirmed that the first death due to COVID-19, also known as the novel coronavirus, occurred on Wednesday, March 11. Governor Laura Kelly announced this development in a news conference at the Capitol on Thursday evening.

The patient in this case was a man in his 70s who had been living in a nursing home in Wyandotte County, KS. On Tuesday, March 10, the patient was admitted to Providence Hospital in Kansas City, KS, with what appeared to be cardiac distress. Because the patient also had a fever at the time of death, a test for COVID-19 was administered posthumously. The positive test results were received by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) on Thursday, March 12.

“We’re saddened to learn that we have lost one of our own,” said Alvey. “Our thoughts are with his loved ones and those impacted by his passing. The Unified Government Public Health Department serving Wyandotte County will continue to conduct a contact investigation in this case. This is a process where we retrace the patient’s steps and activities so that we can identify anyone who may have been potentially exposed to COVID-19. During this process, we will continue to rely on the cooperation and support of KDHE and our local partners in the KC metro area.”

Alvey emphasized that in light of this sad news, it is even more important that residents of Wyandotte County and Kansas City, KS follow the recommendations and guidelines issued by the Unified Government Public Health Department.

“We are strongly recommending that large gatherings be postponed or canceled for the time being to reduce the risk of this virus spreading,” said Alvey.

During a Facebook Live session on Thursday afternoon, Alvey, along with Dr. Allen Greiner, the Chief Medical Officer for the Unified Government, and Ms. Terrie Garrison, the Interim Director of the Unified Government Public Health Department, outlined several recommended actions.

“We’re asking residents, businesses and other regional organizations to take the following steps,” said Greiner. “We feel this measured yet proactive approach is the most effective way to protect the health of our residents. We’re also confident that we can all work together to prevent disease spread and reduce the impact of COVID-19 on our community.”

These measures include:

• Avoid large gatherings
• Practice social distancing by avoiding being closer than 6 feet to others
• If you’re sick, stay home
• Practice good hygiene, including washing hands frequently, and avoid touching your nose, eyes or mouth with unwashed hands at all times
• If you feel ill, call your healthcare provider and stay home until you receive additional instructions from his or her office
• Cover coughs with a tissue or your sleeve

“As yesterday’s news confirms, the virus has arrived in Wyandotte County,” Garrison noted. “Our objective in asking the public to follow these recommendations and learn more about the virus is to contain the spread of the virus and give our residents the information they need to minimize their exposure to it.”

Many common business services like renewing vehicle tags, paying municipal traffic and parking tickets, or appealing a property appraisal can be completed online at mywyco.wycokck.org or via the myWYCO app available on Google Play and Apple’s App Store.

In addition to these measures, the Unified Government is providing residents with a wealth of information on how to best protect themselves from COVID-19. Resources provided by the Unified Government include:

- WYCOKCK.ORG/CORONAVIRUS: This website contains information from the Centers from Disease Control (CDC) and KDHE.
- The Wyandotte County Help Line is available to residents at 3-1-1 for those with questions about COVID-19.

In addition, the KDHE has also set up a hotline at 866-534-3463.

“We also want to point out that, as yesterday’s news shows, some people in our community are at higher risk of serious illness from COVID-19,” said Garrison. “This includes older adults and people with chronic health conditions and those with pre-existing respiratory issues.”

If you or a loved one are at higher risk for serious illness, follow the latest CDC guidelines for people at higher risk. These include:

• Having adequate medications, food, and household supplies on hand
• Avoid crowds
• Planning ahead for what to do if a usual caregiver is sick
• Note: Wearing masks in public is NOT recommended for those who are trying to avoid infection

“KDHE encourages all Kansans to work with their families to create a family action plan,” said Greiner. “This includes planning for medical and dietary needs, identifying a room in your home to separate those who are sick from the rest of the household, and other key decision-making.” To learn more about creating a Family Action Plan, visit KDHEKS.gov/coronavirus or click here.

“The Kansas City metropolitan area has been faced with public health challenges before,” said Alvey. “We persevered then, just as we will now. The Unified Government will continue to update our community through our website and social media regarding this case and any other developments.”

CONTACT: Janell Friesen, Public Information Officer
Unified Government Health Department

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