



PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

RIDGECREST REGIONAL HOSPITAL'S COVID-19 ADVISORY AND RESPONSE

Tuesday, March 12, 2020, RIDGECREST, Calif. - Ridgecrest Regional Hospital continues to follow the latest developments with coronavirus or COVID-19. The hospital is working closely with Kern County Public Health and California Department Public Health (CDPH) to stay up to date with this rapidly evolving situation and are implementing recommendations as more is learned about this disease.

"The safety of our visitors, patients, local communities, employees, and physicians remains our highest priority and we are taking steps to limit the spread of the virus and care for those who need it", said Jim Suver, RRH President/CEO. "At this time, there are still no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Kern County."

"In healthcare, we have the potential to be exposed to infectious diseases at any time, says Brenda Diel, MS, RN, Administrator of Quality, Regulatory, Infection Prevention and Safety at Ridgecrest Regional Hospital. "Our staff are trained to wear the appropriate personal protective equipment and to practice good hand hygiene. Anyone who arrives at the hospital with symptoms will be screened and appropriate precautions will be taken – our Emergency Department, Urgent Care and clinics have processes in place to manage this potential situation. We ask in non-emergency cases that the patient calls ahead to let us know so we can give the instructions prior to arrival. If someone calls 911 – the 911 dispatcher has specific questions they ask in regards to COVID-19 to ensure the safety of the patient and ambulance crew."

"RRH is actively sharing important information on our website and our social media outlets on a daily basis, so we encourage the community to check these platforms regularly for the latest updates," said Jayde Glenn, RRH Director of Marketing & Communications. "We are working closely with the appropriate local agencies and organizations to prepare our community and reduce the risk. This includes canceling our upcoming Health Fair, following public health safety guidelines to cancel large gatherings and events to assist in efforts to prevent the spread of the illness. As news comes in, this now also extends to our Health Fair Screenings in light of newly issued guidance from the CDPH, limiting gatherings of those at higher risk for severe illness to no more than 10 people."

RRH complies with directives from Kern County Public Health regarding the dissemination of information on patients tested, admitted or transferred and in isolation etc. The County Public Health Department releases that information at their discretion.



What action is RRH taking to prepare for a potential outbreak of COVID-19 in the community?

- Respiratory stations have been set up at entrance points throughout the hospital campus and asking everyone to hand sanitize and put on a mask if they have symptoms.
- Hospital's Incident Command Center has been established since the end of February and we are adding new positions as needed. Includes daily conference calls to discuss plans and assess the situation.
- Tested the hospital's emergency management equipment to ensure we prepared and plans are in place *if* there is an increase in patients.
- RRH has supplies to perform tests here. They are then sent to an outside lab and the results turnaround time is approximately 2-3 days. Kern County Public Health is the authority that directs on who needs to be isolated at home and what steps need to be taken. Any person on home isolation will be followed by Kern County Public Health.
- Continue to work with our physicians and nurses to develop processes to care for patients.
- Working with Kern County to ensure we have supplies in the event of patient surge.
- Participated in an Emergency Preparedness Tabletop drill with China Lake NAWS
- Continue working with our local partners in the community and attend community meetings.
- Communication plan:
 - Distributed new signage at entrances advising patients and visitors on if/how they should enter.
 - Communicating the request to all visitors who are ill to stay home
 - Issuing regular press releases and advisory updates on social media, RRH website and local press.
 - New dedicated landing page on website at www.rrh.org/covid19
 - Regular updates and newsletters to employees
 - Communication distributed to group leaders and instructors for RRH Community Outreach classes.

What happens in the event that RRH needs to activate its Emergency Response Plan?

- In the event of activating our Emergency Response Plan, all elective cases would be canceled (non-emergency diagnostic testing, non-emergent surgeries etc.) and we would focus on those needing care in the hospital and emergency room.
- Alternative sites would be utilized, including disaster tents and conference centers.
- We have chosen alternative care sites as well as using the surge tents as additional space to care of patients, if necessary.
- Our clinics would be consolidated and all visits suspended, including well visits, regular appointments.

How can you help RRH in keeping our community healthy?

Follow Prevention Advice (as recommended by the CDC):



- Stay home when you are sick.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the issue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.

Call your provider with concerns:

- If you have recently traveled to affected areas (including: China, South Korea, Japan, Italy, Iran), and have a fever, cough or flu like symptoms, call your provider.

Follow any instructions closely:

- If you are diagnosed, follow the instructions of the healthcare staff closely in order to improve your own recovery and reduce the risk of spreading the virus to others.

ENDS

About Ridgecrest Regional Hospital

Ridgecrest Regional Hospital is a nonprofit, full service, acute care hospital, accredited by DNV Healthcare, with 980 employees. It is a 196 bed facility, including 25 inpatient and 125 Skilled Nursing Facility beds. Located in Ridgecrest, California, it was founded in 1945 by Dr. Thomas A. Drummond, who realized the need for medical care, to support the then recently established Naval Ordnance Test Station. Today, RRH continues as the only regional healthcare system providing a variety of services to the rural communities of the Southern Sierra. Our Vision is to be a leader with other healthcare providers in offering the highest quality, patient-centered, affordable healthcare and wellness services to the people of our service area.

The RRH health system offers multi-specialty healthcare and state-of-the-art facilities, including Gastroenterology Lab, Cardiology, Dermatology, Orthopedics, Pediatrics and an accredited Sleep Lab, to name a few. The hospital also offers a Cancer Center, as part of an ongoing oncology affiliation with UC Davis Health Cancer Care Network, and is one of only a number of hospitals across the country to install FDA-approved state-of-the-art automated breast screening ultrasound technology in the Women's Imaging Department, clinically proven to increase cancer detection by 35.7 percent. The hospital has been awarded the ACR (American College of Radiology) gold seal of accreditation in Radiology and Nuclear Medicine, representing the highest level of image quality and patient safety and the Emergency Department has been designated by Kern County Public Health, as a Level IV trauma center, providing stabilization and advanced trauma life support.

Future plans include a new Emergency Room, new helipad for air ambulance services and the relocation of the Southern Sierra Medical Clinic has recently been completed. For more information, visit us at: rrh.org/, [Facebook.com/RidgecrestRegionalHospital](https://www.facebook.com/RidgecrestRegionalHospital) and Instagram @ridgecrestregionalhospital.