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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Yvonne Humphrey, Public Information Officer, 208-737-5917

South Central Public Health Continues to Monitor COVID-19

TWIN FALLS – As cases of novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) continue to increase throughout the world and in the United States, South Central Public Health District (SCPHD) is monitoring the situation and working closely with healthcare partners.

“This is something that we plan and train for on a regular basis,” said Josh Jensen, SCPHD Public Health Preparedness Program Manager. “Public Health and hospitals have plans and procedures in place to handle infectious diseases, and we drill those plans on a regular basis so we are ready for outbreaks like COVID-19.”

To date, there have been no cases of COVID-19 in Idaho and 15 confirmed cases in the United States. While it is likely there may be additional cases in the U.S. in the future, actions have been taken to limit the spread of the virus. Locally, SCPHD receives notifications of travelers who return from areas where potential exposure to COVID-19 is high. These individuals are contacted by SCPHD and monitored for 14 days after exposure, as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). If the exposed person does not develop symptoms within this monitoring period, they are no longer considered to be at risk for having or spreading the virus. Because the 14-day monitoring period starts after the person’s last potential exposure to the virus, for some people, monitoring may not be necessary once they return home.

“We understand people are concerned about this new disease,” said Tanis Maxwell, SCPHD Epidemiology Program Manager. “The risk of transmission within the general public remains low, and there are precautions people can take to minimize their risk of contracting any respiratory illness.”

SCPHD recommends everyday actions to help prevent the spread of all respiratory diseases, including:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with your elbow or a tissue; throw the tissue 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.

For the latest information on COVID-19 visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html> or <https://www.phd5.idaho.gov/CoronaVirus/>. SCPHD can also be contacted at (208) 737-5971.