



*Our Vision: Healthy People in Healthy Communities*

**Adams, Clay, Nuckolls and Webster Counties**

For Immediate Release

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Health Officials requesting travelers to self-quarantine, monitor themselves for symptoms

**Hastings, Neb.** Local health officials announced recommendations for travelers returning to the region from other countries and other states. To reduce spread of the new coronavirus, COVID-19, the recommendations include self-quarantine, monitoring for symptoms, and social distancing. Michele Bever, executive director for the South Heartland District Health Department said the department is responding to the State of Nebraska’s elevated risk assessment this past weekend.

“Our priority is to protect our South Heartland residents,” Bever said. “Self-quarantine helps protect others, especially our most vulnerable – older adults, individuals with chronic illnesses and people who are immune-compromised – from being exposed to diseases like COVID-19 that may be more difficult for them to fight.”

At this time there are still no confirmed COVID-19 cases in the South Heartland area of Adams, Clay, Nuckolls and Webster counties, but Bever said this could change quickly. “There is sustained community spread of COVID-19 in many parts of the world and in locations within the United States,” she said. “Many people travel during March, so, we are taking actions to help minimize the amount of illness that could be brought back to our communities unintentionally.”

Last week the World Health Organization declared the outbreak of COVID-19 to be a pandemic, meaning a global outbreak. Bever said that public health actions, such as quarantine and social distancing, can help reduce the effects of a pandemic on the health care system, which could easily be overwhelmed dealing with large numbers of ill individuals.

With Nebraska’s elevated risk assessment, Nebraskans, in general, may be at the same risk as travelers from other areas in the nation and other parts of the world. Bever said depending on the destination’s level of risk, some returning travelers are being asked to monitor their symptoms and practice social distancing for 14 days. Social distancing could include avoiding large gatherings and close contact.

New CDC guidance released March 15 recommends canceling or postponing events with 50 or more people to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in the United States via travelers who attend these events and bring the virus to new communities.

Returning travelers are being asked to self-quarantine (remain under home isolation) for fourteen (14) days and to self-monitor for symptoms to help prevent the disease from harming people in their home and community.

“For travelers returning to Nebraska from higher risk areas, such as Europe or the states of Washington, New York, California and Colorado that are experiencing sustained community transmission of the virus, we are requesting self-quarantine and we will check in with (actively monitor) these individuals each day

to record their temperatures, ask how they are feeling and note any symptoms they are experiencing,” Bever said.

All travelers are being asked to report to the health department by completing a survey on the state website: <http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx#SectionLink2>.

**Areas of the world with widespread sustained transmission of COVID-19, are at increased risk and of special concern. For more information about areas with higher levels of risk check for updates here:**

**United States:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/travel-in-the-us.html>

**Internationally:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/after-travel-precautions.html>

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Public health recommendations for travelers:

- A. All returning travelers have an increased risk of exposure to COVID-19
- B. All returning travelers should limit public interactions, practice strict social-distancing, and self-monitor for symptoms
- C. If a returning traveler develops fever or respiratory illness, they need to IMMEDIATELY self-isolate and report to a provider or call South Heartland District Health Department’s 24/7 line at 402-469-6480.
- D. Returning travelers need to track the publicly reported COVID-19 disease burden in the areas to which they have travelled through both the local/state public health departments and public media websites. Areas with widespread sustained transmission, please see list below, are at increased risk and of special concern. Such travelers should self-quarantine for 14 days and immediately report any symptoms consistent with COVID-19 infection to their health care provider. Individuals unable to observe the 14-day self-quarantine should consult with SHDHD: 402-469-6480.
- E. Health care workers with a travel history from an area with widespread sustained transmission or other high-risk exposure should consult with a trained medical professional (e.g. infection preventionist or physician) at their facility and establish an infection control protocol (e.g., home quarantine, self-monitoring, PPE while at work etc.) that mitigates the risk of patient and co-worker exposure.