Hays County, Texas

Information for the News Media
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County, Cities Issue Disaster Declarations to Stay Ahead of Potential COVID-19 Needs

Hays County Courthouse, San Marcos, TX (March 16, 2020) – Hays County Judge Ruben Becerra and mayors from throughout Hays County announced disaster declarations at a press conference Sunday at the Hays County Courthouse. The declarations allow local governments to allocate resources and personnel as well as request funds and additional resources from the state and federal governments to assist in managing the effects of COVID-19, also known as novel coronavirus.

One resident of Hays County is presumed positive for the virus and is self-quarantined at home following travel to the West Coast. That person did not have contact with Hays County residents, and Hays County Epidemiologist Eric Schneider said the chances of contracting COVID-19 from that person are low to nil. Schneider noted the hospital the patient went to after getting off the plane March 12 followed all proper protocols to ensure the virus wasn't spread there.

At the press conference, Judge Becerra expressed his appreciation for the collaboration with cities and school districts, saying, "We are working together on every front – what you see here is merely the tip of the spear of your government working for you. I am grateful to have a visible show of support here and we are at every level united."

Mayor Jane Hughson of San Marcos, Mayor Travis Mitchell of Kyle, Mayor George Haehn of Buda, and Mayor Pro Tem Rebecca Minnick of Wimberley each addressed reporters as did Rep. Erin Zwiener, while Mayor Pro Tem Bill Foulds of Dripping Springs lent support by his presence. Common themes emerged as each spoke:

- Governments throughout the county are working together, and collaborating with the state and federal governments, all of which have plans and protocols in place for all types of emergencies

-The need for residents to follow good hygiene practices

-Supply chains are operating as normal, making stockpiling supplies unnecessary.

"We did not have an earthquake or a hurricane, we still have lights and water and the supply chain will still move cargo," Judge Becerra said. "Everything is going to be fine in reference to

supplies." Because some residents are stockpiling and purchasing more than a normal amount, stores are having difficulty restocking shelves, causing shoppers to think supplies are low.

Residents who are healthy were also encouraged to look out for neighbors who might have difficulty in navigating grocery store crowds as well as those who are food insecure or whose income has suddenly dropped.

"This is just a virus – it's not Ebola – and it spreads like flu," Schneider, Epidemiologist for the Hays County Local Health Department, said. "Please stay home if you feel sick or have a fever. The majority of people who get this and stay home will have the virus run its course and go back to their normal daily life 48 hours after they are fever-free. There is no magic pill for this. If your doctor orders a test and you test positive you still go home and wait it out." He noted that persons who experience a sudden spike in fever (104 degrees or above) or shortness of breath should definitely seek medical attention, but otherwise over-the-counter fever medications are the usual treatment. Schneider also pointed out that unless a person is already exhibiting symptoms a test would come back negative for the virus.

To watch the press conference on YouTube: https://youtu.be/3VRTirrHrhE. For additional information about COVID-19 visit your city's website, the Hays County website, www.HaysInformed.com, the Centers for Disease Control, or the Texas Department of State Health Services.

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