On behalf of the City of Austin, City Manager Craig Clark released a letter to residents of the city Monday morning concerning the possible spread of the COVID-19, or coronavirus. The letter reads...

We are all concerned about the spread of the Coronavirus and City of Austin Officials are monitoring the situation and following the recommendations from the Mower County Department of Public Health, Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) for both the public and that of our city employees. These public health organizations and their staff are the primary responsible parties for these types of outbreaks but local public safety departments such as Austin Fire and Austin Police Departments are front lines of interfacing with potential issues and we stand ready to address these situations with our key partners. We are also working closely with our health care providers as we transfer any impacted people to healthcare facilities.

The following is a list of some of the actions we have taken to address the Coronavirus situation here at the City:

Close the library, interpretative building of the nature center and arenas from Wednesday March 18-29th;

Gain Council approval of a Pandemic Plan specifically for this outbreak;

Canceled any programming until further notice;

Dispatch will send officers/firefighters to medicals our current guidelines. Nothing changes in that regard.

Medical calls will have single responder entry where appropriate to limit possible exposure;

Discussions have happened and will be ongoing with Mayo Ambulance Service regarding best practices for our community;

Make adjustments to the work areas to limit exposure at City Hall;
Discuss protocol for remote Council meetings if necessary;

Review quarantine laws should impacted patients be identified;

Review and consider action plans for the possibility of staff sicknesses and how we continue critical operations;

Purchase any supplemental personal protection equipment needed for first responders;

Practice proper hygiene methods of hand washing, cleaning any shared equipment and making available hand sanitizer and

Review and consider cleaning protocols in public use areas.

We remind our residents to maintain proper prevention practices that are effective in controlling this outbreak stage and should be used each year during the flu season. These include:

Stay home if you are ill

Frequently wash hands with warm soap and water for at least 20 seconds

Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands

Avoid people who are ill

Do not share water bottles

Cover your cough or sneeze using a tissue

Stay away from large groups of people especially if you are amongst a vulnerable population group

This is a very concerning situation and as recommendations from Mower County Department of Public Health, MDH and CDC change we will update our communications to you should that become necessary. Additional information you may find helpful can be found at: https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/index.html