

PRESS RELEASE



Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
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December 23, 2020
3:15 PM ChST

CHCC-PR-21-131

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Critical Essential Worker Tests Positive for COVID-19: Control Measures in Place

The Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and the Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation (CHCC) have identified that a member of the CHCC personnel tested positive for COVID-19 on December 22, 2020. The CHCC personnel is one (1) of two (2) individuals identified by travel screening and confirmed diagnosis through fifth (5th) day testing as per current incoming traveler protocols set forth by the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and the CHCC. This brings the CNMI's total to 118 confirmed cases since March 28, 2020.

The individual was recently on official travel as a medical escort for severely and critically ill patients from Saipan to Hawaii, and the U.S. Mainland.

The individual in this instance is asymptomatic, and the virus may have been incubating at the point of testing on the first day, but not at detectable levels. On the scheduled fifth day testing, the individual tested positive for COVID-19 and was safely transported to the designated isolation area for close monitoring. In addition, persons under investigation (PUI) who were immediately identified as close contacts were also transported to the designated isolation area for testing and monitoring. So far, tests results have returned negative for COVID-19, but will be tested again before being released. Contact tracing for additional close contacts of the new confirmed case was conducted and is still being investigated.

As a healthcare worker enroute from escorting several patients, the individual was approved for "Critical Essential Work" status upon entry into the CNMI, and was tested on arrival. Upon receiving a negative test result for COVID-19, the individual was released for self-quarantine under stringent monitoring by the Contact Tracing Team (CTT).

The CTT protocols require the regular and consistent monitoring for an individual that has been categorized as a "Critical Essential Worker". The method of monitoring includes the constant and regular physical check-in of the individual at their place of employment and residence. Included in the physical monitoring of the individual the CTT conducts 10 to 20 check-ins via phone including after hours. These steps are done for all approved critical essential workers, including those not employed by the CHCC. Per the CDC guidance, prompt identification, voluntary isolation or quarantine, and monitoring of a person diagnosed with COVID-19 and their contacts can effectively break the chain of disease transmission and prevent further spread of the virus. Case investigation and contact tracing are core disease control measures that have been used by state and local health departments for decades to slow or stop the spread of infectious diseases (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/php/contact-tracing-CDC-role-and-approach.pdf>)

The Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and the CHCC has implemented a stringent quarantine criterion for travelers. No traveler is exempt from quarantine. All travelers are quarantined for some duration, and the length of duration of quarantine is determined by the applicant's information, strength of justification, and assessment of the critical nature of work. If approved for "*Critical Essential Work*" status and after a negative COVID-19 test result has been received from testing on arrival, one may be approved to self-quarantine at their own lodging with limited movement and barred from attending any form of congregate setting (restaurant, bars, church, meetings, etc.). In addition, they are expected to adhere to the CDC's 3W guidelines: (wear a mask, wash your hands, and watch your distance from others).

Due to the nature of this evolving virus, this underscores the value of adherence to local protocols for arrival screening and to comply with required prevention and quarantine measures set in place.

Practice the 3 W's - Wash your hands. Watch your distance. Wear a face covering.

- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, avoid touching your face, cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not readily available.
- Practice social distancing, which means avoiding close contact with people in order to avoid catching the virus yourself and to avoid passing it on to others.
- The more people an individual interacts with at a gathering and the longer that interaction lasts, the higher the potential risk of becoming infected with COVID-19 and COVID-19 spreading. (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/considerationsfor-events-gatherings.html>)
- Wear a face covering
- Be cautious when dining out and pick up food through drive-thru, take-out, or delivery options when possible.
- Only one healthy adult from the household should run necessary errands, such as getting groceries or picking up medications. Leave children, elderly, and other vulnerable people at home as much as possible. When returning home from an errand, wash your hands before doing anything else.
 - Older adults and people with chronic medical conditions are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness. People at high risk should stay at home as much as possible.
- Create a household plan of action <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/checklisthousehold-ready.html>
- Ensure a 30-day supply of all medicines.

Know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and what to do if you become symptomatic:

- Stay home when you are sick and if you recently traveled to a place with COVID-19. Self-quarantine means:
 - Avoid or limit visiting public places. Do not visit your place of work. You may leave to get necessary medical care, food, or other supplies if no one else in your household is able to fulfill these needs for you.
 - Separate yourself from others in your home, especially if you are experiencing symptoms or if others in your home are not in quarantine. Limit visitors
 - Stay in a separate room and use a separate bathroom if possible.
 - We encourage you and people in your household to wear a face covering.
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
 - Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

- Cover your coughs/sneezes with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash. If there is no tissue, use your sleeve. Not your hands!
- Practice social-distancing and wear a face-covering. If you need to go out, maintain at least 6 feet distance away from others. Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Take your temperature and keep a log of any symptoms you might have. A fever is 100.4°F or 38°C

For more information about CHCC programs, please follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter at @cnmichcc, check out our website at www.chcc.gov.mp or call us at (670) 234-8950.

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For more information about the CNMI's COVID-19 Vaccine efforts please visit www.VaccinateCNMI.com

This press release may be found online at <http://www.chcc.gov.mp/pressrelease.html>

