

The Town of Douglas is participating in the national and state response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The role of local government in this response has two primary components:

1. Assist in the identification, testing, and tracking of potentially infected persons; the issuance and enforcement of quarantine and/or isolation orders as needed. The lead agency in this task is the Board of Health;
2. Comply with social distancing policies in order to slow, and eventually stop, the spread of the coronavirus. Various local departments are bringing their operations into line with these policies.

With respect to the first task, residents are encouraged to rely upon the federal Center for Disease Control (CDC) for the most up to date and reliable information regarding the virus and measures being taken against it. The CDC website on coronavirus may be reached at this link:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

Anyone who believes they may have the symptoms of COVID-19, which most commonly include a dry cough and a fever, should interact with a medical clinician. If you have a primary care physician, that is the place to start. Senior citizens and those with heart and lung problems are at elevated risk and should not hesitate to ask for help. You may be asked to isolate yourself and standby for testing. If you are in that situation, or have already been tested and are awaiting results, or have tested and know your results, you are requested to inform the Douglas Board of Health at 508-476-4000 extension 252 during normal business hours, and via the Emergency Operations Center at all other times using the number provided below. You may also email the Board at apodstawka@douglasma.org.

The Douglas Board of Health is the local agency working with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts COVID-19 task force to document and interact with people who may have had exposure to COVID-19. The Town Nurse is the public health official responsible for documenting cases of infectious disease and will reach out via email, telephone and site visits in order to complete this task. The Board of Health is the central point for the collection of information and providing guidance to the remainder of Town government on efforts to manage and prevent the spread of the virus. Your cooperation with this effort is deeply appreciated.

Douglas Emergency Medical Services (EMS) continues to operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The dedicated members of the Douglas Fire and Ambulance Department are highly trained in the use of personal protective equipment and medical protocols to prevent the spread of communicable diseases. Please remember that the EMS is an emergency service; if you are able to communicate with your doctor, that is your first point of contact.

However, if you are experiencing shortness of breath or other serious symptoms that prevent you from functioning normally and taking care of your own needs, you should call 911 and state the nature of your emergency in as much detail as possible. Douglas dispatchers are trained and instructed to relate important information to our EMS personnel. Please help us maintain our vital EMS for all our residents regardless of the cause of their need by providing symptoms, details of recent travel, or exposure to people who might have COVID-19 so that proper precautions will be assured and unnecessary exposures avoided.

Monday, March 16, 2020 is the first day of several important measures that have been decided upon to keep Douglas in step with the second goal noted above – preventing the spread of the virus. These measures include:

1. Douglas Public Schools are closed for at least two weeks. During this two week period, the buildings will receive a deep cleaning.
2. The Douglas Adult Social Center (formerly known as the Senior Center) is closed for at least two weeks. This facility will also be extensively cleaned.
3. The gymnasium at the Municipal Center is closed and all access will be secured for at least two weeks. Once again, cleaning will be done.
4. The Municipal Center will remain open for the time being to allow for building permits and other routine business to be completed if already in progress. Since the COVID-19 situation may not yet have reached its peak, interested parties are kindly requested to refrain from opening new permit applications at this time.
5. Municipal boards and commissions that do not have time sensitive matters to resolve will be asked to suspend their meeting schedules. The Board of Selectmen and the Board of Health will need to meet, and may add meetings to fulfill their roles during this emergency response. All of these likely changes must be posted in accordance with law. Unless and until stated otherwise, all Town board and committee meetings are open to the public, and all members of boards and committees shall attend meetings in person. The Selectmen will be considering meetings policies at their scheduled session on Tuesday, March 17, pending which there may be additional information regarding public meetings.

Effective 9:00 AM on Monday, March 16, 2020 the Douglas Emergency Operations Center (EOC) will be activated for purposes of documenting the Town's available assets, ongoing efforts and expenses, and to provide essential communication to the public. The EOC is a support function for the Town's public safety departments, formed to bring information and resources together for effective and efficient operations when a complex situation arises. This step does not reflect the severity of a situation as much as it reflects the need for coordinated activity addressing needs that may range outside the core mission of public safety functions and/or require extensive engagement with the public.

While the EOC is in operation, it is the official source of information for the Town's residents and the media. Important messages will be posted to the Douglas cable television channel, the Town's official website (www.douglas-ma.gov), and the Douglas Police and Fire Department Facebook pages. All press inquiries and resident questions and concerns should be addressed to the EOC via the Board of Selectmen's Office at 508-476-4000 extension 200.

Thank you for your patience. With public support and participation, we hope this situation will be resolved quickly and normalcy re-established as quickly as possible.