

NEWS RELEASE

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Hidalgo County Department Heads Told to Review Emergency Management Plans

EDINBURG – The non-elected heads of most major Hidalgo County departments were asked by County Judge Richard F. Cortez on Tuesday to review and update their agency’s emergency management plans to prepare for all contingencies related to any possible future spread of coronavirus into the region.

“I want us to become the gold standard when it comes to emergency planning,” Judge Cortez told about twenty department heads and their support staff during an hour-long meeting in the Commissioners Court chambers. Under state law, Judge Cortez is in charge of emergency management operations for Hidalgo County.

While no active coronavirus cases, also known as COVID-19, have been reported in Hidalgo County, Judge Cortez acknowledged seeing a growing public concern regarding the virus and its potential impact on the region. His intent, he told the group, was to assure the public that county officials are on top of developments regarding the virus, but also to assure the public that county government is ready for any contingency.

The department heads first received a status report regarding COVID-19 from Eduardo Olivarez, Chief Administrative Officer of Hidalgo County Health and Human Services Department. Most confirmed COVID-19 cases in the United States are along the east and west coast of this country, Olivarez said. The only confirmed cases in Texas have been among U.S. citizens who were brought from China or the coast of Japan who had been exposed to the virus in those Asian countries.

Then Chief Ricardo Saldaña, the county’s Emergency Management Coordinator, gave an overview of the county’s emergency management plan with the directive from Judge Cortez for all department heads to review the existing plan and update it for any contingency. He reminded the county officials that hurricane season is fast approaching and these plans should be applicable for all types of emergencies.

Part of Judge Cortez’s mandate for county officials is to keep residents informed and to ensure the continuity of government during any emergency.

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