



Hidalgo County Commissioners Court

Richard F. Cortez
County Judge

David L. Fuentes
Commissioner, Precinct 1

Eduardo "Eddie" Cantu
Commissioner, Precinct 2

Joe M. Flores
Commissioner, Precinct 3

Ellie Torres
Commissioner, Precinct 4

**OFFICE OF
COUNTY JUDGE
RICHARD F. CORTEZ**

Public Affairs Division

100 E. Cano St., 1st Floor
(956) 292-7026 P
(956) 292-7766 F
www.co.hidalgo.tx.us W
Public.Info@co.hidalgo.tx.us E

NEWS ADVISORY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, March 5, 2020

Hidalgo County announces a higher level of preparedness for COVID-19 outbreak

EDINBURG –Although the risk of contracting coronavirus remains low in this region, Hidalgo County Judge Richard F. Cortez said Thursday that he wants to move in a cautious manner and assure that all resources are available to prepare for any potential outbreak. In response to reports of a presumptive positive case of COVID-19, or coronavirus, Judge Cortez announced that the Hidalgo County Office of Emergency Management and the Hidalgo County Health and Human Services Department are moving to a Level 3 BIO Emergency Operations Status.

This raises the level of preparedness in case of any COVID-19 outbreak in Hidalgo County, Judge Cortez said. County health officials emphasize that NO CASES of COVID-19 have been diagnosed in Hidalgo County and that this elevated status increases the level of preparedness.

"We must emphasize that there is no reason to panic under this designation," said Judge Cortez. "In fact, Hidalgo County residents should be assured that this provides additional resources to monitor and prepare for any contingency related to COVID-19."

County Health Chief Administrative Officer Eduardo "Eddie" Olivarez noted that Hidalgo County has been in a Level 3 status several times in recent history, including the 2009 outbreak of the H1-N1 pandemic.

An Incident Action Plan is being prepared for Judge Cortez, who is the director of emergency management for Hidalgo County under state law. This Incident Action Plan will outline specific measures that are being taken by both the health department and the Office of Emergency Management to prepare for any potential outbreak. This includes daily briefings to county officials and routine briefings to the media and the public.

The decision to raise the preparedness level came during an emergency meeting at the county health department that occurred Thursday morning after the presumptive positive case in the Houston area was revealed. A presumptive positive means that a Fort Bend County patient who traveled to Italy tested positive for COVID-19 at a Houston laboratory. But only the Centers for Disease Control can declare the patient positive for COVID-19.

- MORE -

Hidalgo County is home to one of the fastest growing regions in the nation. We provide health and justice to the over 800,000 residents of our county. We strive to be accessible and responsive to our citizens by providing excellent public service through the values of leadership, transparency, fairness, collaboration, respect and fiscal responsibility. Follow our social media feed at www.co.hidalgo.tx.us/followus



Hidalgo County Commissioners Court

Richard F. Cortez
County Judge

David L. Fuentes
Commissioner, Precinct 1

Eduardo "Eddie" Cantu
Commissioner, Precinct 2

Joe M. Flores
Commissioner, Precinct 3

Ellie Torres
Commissioner, Precinct 4

**OFFICE OF
COUNTY JUDGE
RICHARD F. CORTEZ**

Public Affairs Division

100 E. Cano St., 1st Floor
(956) 292-7026 P
(956) 292-7766 F
www.co.hidalgo.tx.us W
Public.Info@co.hidalgo.tx.us E

Among the measures related to this Bio Emergency Operation is the beginning of briefings with:

- area school nurses and administrators
- area city managers and mayors
- hospital administrators
- state and federal officials
- private sector officials

Any immediate updates will be posted on the Hidalgo County website:
<https://www.hidalgocounty.us/2630/Coronavirus-Updates>

###

Hidalgo County is home to one of the fastest growing regions in the nation. We provide health and justice to the over 800,000 residents of our county. We strive to be accessible and responsive to our citizens by providing excellent public service through the values of leadership, transparency, fairness, collaboration, respect and fiscal responsibility. Follow our social media feed at www.co.hidalgo.tx.us/followus