

# Wash. state sees 1st virus death in US, declares emergency

February 29 2020, by Andrew Selsky

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A person is taken by stretcher to a waiting ambulance from a nursing facility where more than 50 people are sick and being tested for the COVID-19 virus, Saturday, Feb. 29, 2020, in Kirkland, Wash. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)

The governor of Washington declared a state of emergency Saturday

after a man died there of COVID-19, the first such reported death in the United States. More than 50 people in a nursing facility are sick and being tested for the virus.

Gov. Jay Inslee directed state agencies to use "all resources necessary" to prepare for and respond to the coronavirus outbreak. The declaration also allows the use of the Washington National Guard, if necessary.

"We will continue to work toward a day where no one dies from this virus," the governor vowed.

Health officials in California, Oregon and Washington state are worried about the novel coronavirus spreading through West Coast communities because a growing number of people are being infected despite not having visited an area where there was an outbreak, nor apparently been in contact with anyone who had.

The man who died was in his 50s, had underlying health conditions and no history of travel or contact with a known COVID-19 case, health officials in Washington state said at a news conference. A spokesperson for EvergreenHealth Medical Center, Kayse Dahl, said the person died in the facility in the Seattle suburb of Kirkland.

Dr. Frank Riedo, medical director of Infection Control at Evergreen, said local hospitals are seeing people with severe coronavirus symptoms but it's probable that there are more cases in the community.



A staff member blocks the view as a person is taken by a stretcher to a waiting ambulance from a nursing facility where more than 50 people are sick and being tested for the COVID-19 virus, Saturday, Feb. 29, 2020, in Kirkland, Wash. Health officials reported two cases of COVID-19 virus connected to the Life Care Center of Kirkland. One is a Life Care worker, a woman in her 40s who is in satisfactory condition at a hospital, and the other is a woman in her 70s and a resident at Life Care who is hospitalized in serious condition. Neither have traveled out of the country. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)

"This is the tip of the iceberg," he said.

The health officials reported two cases of COVID-19 virus connected to a long-term care facility in the same suburb, Life Care Center of Kirkland. One is a Life Care worker, a woman in her 40s who is in

satisfactory condition at a hospital, and the other is a woman in her 70s and a resident at Life Care who is hospitalized in serious condition. Neither had traveled abroad.

"In addition, over 50 individuals associated with Life Care are reportedly ill with respiratory symptoms or hospitalized with pneumonia or other respiratory conditions of unknown cause and are being tested for COVID-19," Seattle and King County officials said. "Additional positive cases are expected."

Overlake Medical Center in Bellevue, Washington, said a health care worker from Life Care is a patient at the hospital. The woman, who is in her 40s, was admitted to the hospital Thursday and is in stable condition, the center said.



A man blocks the view as a person is taken by a stretcher to a waiting ambulance from a nursing facility where more than 50 people are sick and being tested for the COVID-19 virus, Saturday, Feb. 29, 2020, in Kirkland, Wash. Health officials reported two cases of COVID-19 virus connected to the Life Care Center of Kirkland. One is a Life Care worker, a woman in her 40s who is in satisfactory condition at a hospital, and the other is a woman in her 70s and a resident at Life Care who is hospitalized in serious condition. Neither have traveled out of the country. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)

Amy Reynolds of the Washington state health department said in a brief telephone interview: "We are dealing with an emergency evolving situation."

No one answered the phone at Life Care, but Ellie Basham, its executive director, said in a statement that residents and employees are being monitored and those with symptoms or who were potentially exposed are quarantined. The facility has banned families, volunteers and vendors as a precaution, Basham said.

A growing number of cases in California, Washington state and Oregon are confounding authorities because the infected people hadn't recently traveled overseas or had any known close contact with a traveler or an infected person.

The Santa Clara County Public Health Department announced Saturday the case of a fourth person in the county infected with coronavirus, The case is of a woman who is a "household contact" of a person who is hospitalized with the virus, the health department said in a news release.



An ambulance worker adjusts her protective mask as she wheels a stretcher into a nursing facility where more than 50 people are sick and being tested for the COVID-19 virus, Saturday, Feb. 29, 2020, in Kirkland, Wash. Health officials reported two cases of COVID-19 virus connected to the Life Care Center of Kirkland. One is a Life Care worker, a woman in her 40s who is in satisfactory condition at a hospital, and the other is a woman in her 70s and a resident at Life Care who is hospitalized in serious condition. Neither have traveled out of the country. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)

The woman has not been hospitalized and is not ill, the department said.

In Oregon, the state's Health Authority said Saturday that the second person who was tested for exposure to the virus doesn't have it. The agency said in a statement that it "continues approving testing for

persons under investigation, a number that's likely to increase following the report of the state's first presumptive case and new Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance that calls for testing of anyone experiencing severe respiratory symptoms."

The U.S. has about 60 confirmed cases. Worldwide, the number of people sickened by the virus hovered Friday around 83,000, and there were more than 2,800 deaths, most of them in China. A 60-year-old U.S. citizen died in Wuhan in early February.

Most infections result in mild symptoms, including coughing and fever, though some can become more serious and lead to pneumonia. Older people, especially those with chronic illnesses such as heart or lung disease, are especially vulnerable. Health officials think it spreads mainly from droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes, similar to how the flu spreads.



EvergreenHealth Medical Center is seen Saturday, Feb. 29, 2020, where a person died of COVID-19, in Kirkland, Wash. State health officials announced the death Saturday, marking the first such reported death in the United States. State officials issued a terse news release announcing the death, and gave no details before a scheduled news conference later in the day. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)

The number of coronavirus cases in the United States is considered small. But convinced that they will grow, health agencies are ramping up efforts to identify those who might be sick.

To achieve more rapid testing capacity, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration issued an accelerated policy Saturday enabling laboratories to use tests they develop. FDA Commissioner Stephen Hahn



said his agency is "rapidly responding and adapting to this dynamic and evolving situation."

The California Department of Public Health said Friday that the state will receive enough kits from the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention to test up to 1,200 people a day for the COVID-19 virus—a day after Gov. Gavin Newsom complained to federal health officials that the state had already exhausted its initial 200 test kits.



Santa Clara County Public Health Department Director Dr. Sara Cody speaks during a news conference in San Jose, Calif., on Friday, Feb. 28, 2020. Santa Clara County health officials confirmed a second case of unknown origin of the novel coronavirus. (Anda Chu/Bay Area News Group via AP)

Oregon was able to more quickly identify a case—an employee of an elementary school in Lake Oswego near Portland because it was able to test a sample locally. School district officials said Saturday the employee had been visited in the hospital by several people before he was diagnosed. Those individuals have been asked to observe a two-week quarantine and are being closely monitored.

Worried shoppers thronged a Costco box store near Lake Oswego, emptying shelves of items including toilet paper, paper towels, bottled water, frozen berries and black beans.

"Toilet paper is golden in an apocalypse," one Costco employee said.

Employees said the store ran out of toilet paper for the first time in its history and that it was the busiest they had ever seen, including during Christmas Eve.

The district is deep-cleaning all its schools and all school buses with the goal of having students back in class Monday, said Superintendent Lora de la Cruz. But Forest Hills Elementary, where the man worked, is closed until Wednesday, marking two weeks since he was last at the school.



Santa Clara County Public Health Department Director Dr. Sara Cody speaks during a news conference in San Jose, Calif., on Friday, Feb. 28, 2020. Santa Clara County health officials confirmed a second case of unknown origin of the novel coronavirus. (Anda Chu/Bay Area News Group via AP)

Earlier U.S. cases include three people who were evacuated from the central China city of Wuhan, epicenter of the outbreak; 14 people who returned from China, or their spouses; and 42 American passengers on the Diamond Princess cruise ship, who were flown to U.S. military bases in California and Texas for quarantining.

The U.S. government looked at sending dozens of Californians, several of whom tested positive for the virus, who had been aboard the cruise ship to a state-owned facility in Costa Mesa, California. Local officials

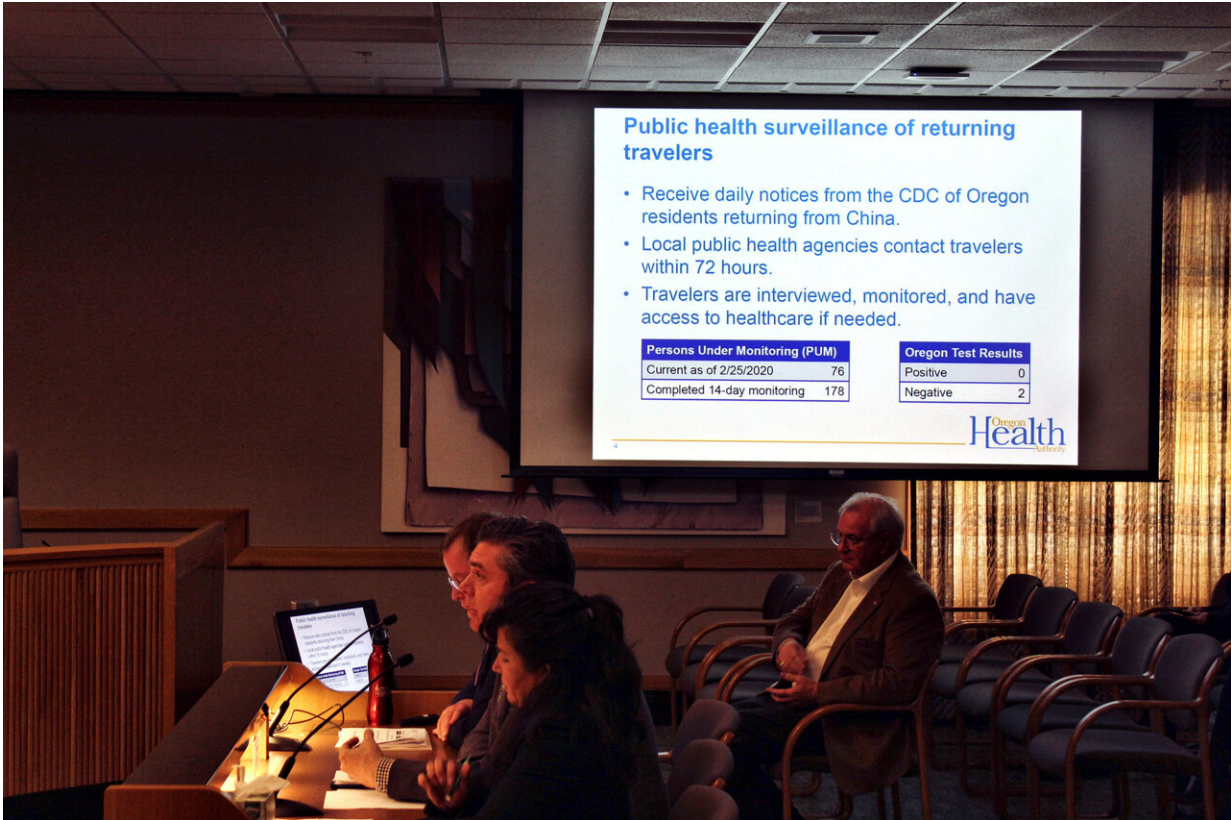
objected, saying they weren't included in the planning and wanting to know what safeguards would be in place to prevent spread of the virus. The U.S. government said it didn't need to use the facility after all.

At UC Davis Medical Center in California, at least 124 registered nurses and other health care workers were sent home for "self-quarantine" after a Solano County woman with the virus was admitted, National Nurses United, a nationwide union representing registered nurses, said Friday.



Three officials of the Oregon Health Authority testified on Friday, Feb. 28, 2020, before a committee of the Oregon Legislature in Salem, on preparations for a possible outbreak of coronavirus in Oregon. Appearing before the House Committee on Health Care were, from left, OHA Director Patrick Allen, Dean Sidelinger, state health officer and state epidemiologist, and Akiko Saito, section manager of health security, preparedness and response. (AP Photo/Andrew

Selsky)



Three officials of the Oregon Health Authority, left, testify on Friday, Feb. 28, 2020, before a committee of the Oregon Legislature in Salem, on preparations for a possible outbreak of coronavirus in Oregon. Appearing before the House Committee on Health Care were, from front to back Akiko Saito, section manager of health security, preparedness and response, Dean Sidelinger, state health officer and state epidemiologist, and OHA Director Patrick Allen. At right is Rep. David Gomberg, a Democrat from the Oregon coast (AP Photo/Andrew Selsky)



President Donald Trump listens during a news conference about the coronavirus in the press briefing room at the White House, Saturday, Feb. 29, 2020, in Washington. (AP Photo/Andrew Harnik)

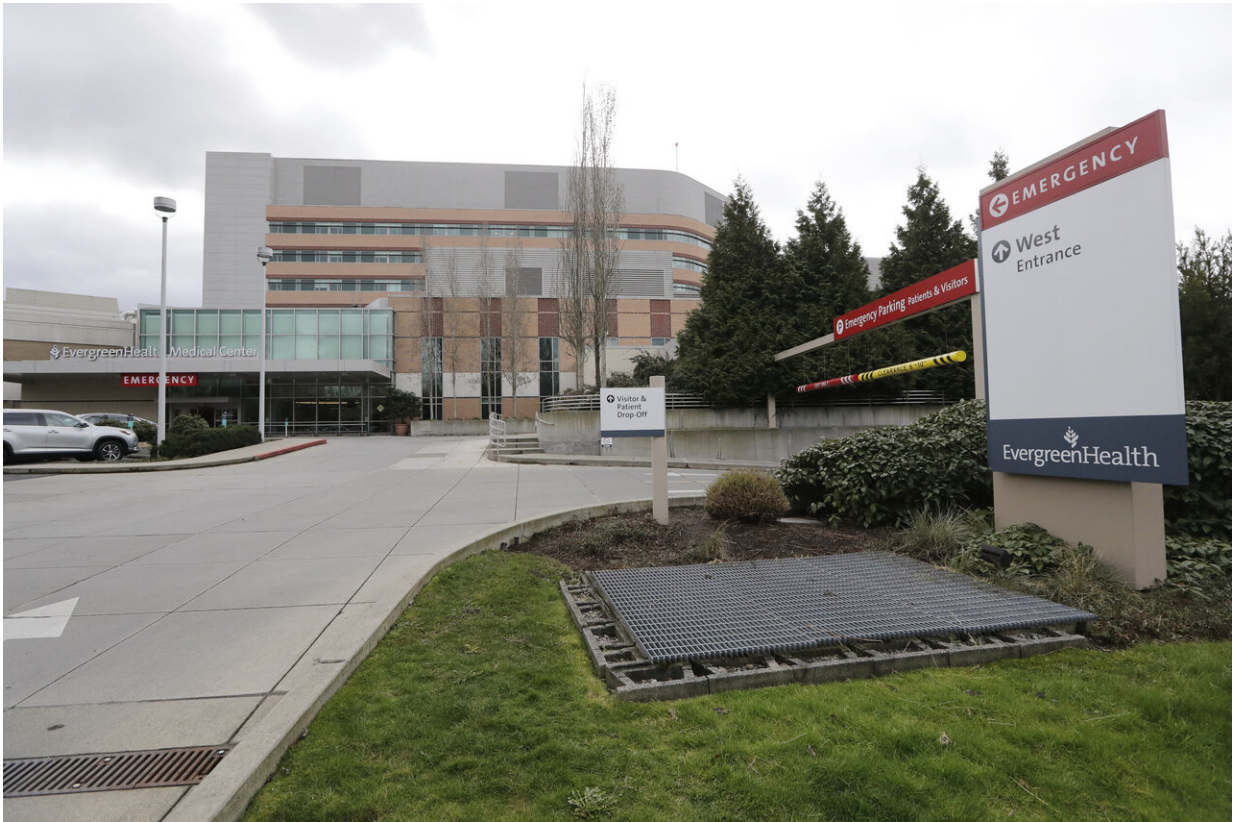


National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases Director Dr. Anthony Fauci, left, accompanied by President Donald Trump, speaks about the coronavirus during a news conference in the press briefing room at the White House, Saturday, Feb. 29, 2020, in Washington. (AP Photo/Andrew Harnik)



EvergreenHealth Medical Center is seen Saturday, Feb. 29, 2020, where a person died of COVID-19, in Kirkland, Wash. State health officials announced the death Saturday, marking the first such reported death in the United States. Gov. Jay Inslee directed state agencies to use "all resources necessary" to prepare for and respond to the outbreak. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)





EvergreenHealth Medical Center is seen Saturday, Feb. 29, 2020, where a person died of COVID-19, in Kirkland, Wash. State health officials announced the death Saturday, marking the first such reported death in the United States. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)



Dr. Lora de la Cruz, superintendent of the Lake Oswego School District in Lake Oswego, Ore., at podium, speaks at a media briefing on Feb. 29, 2020 about a case of coronavirus diagnosed in an employee of an elementary school in the district. The school is closed until Wednesday and all schools and school buses in the district south of Portland, Oregon are being deep-cleaned over the weekend. (AP Photo/Gillian Flaccus)



EvergreenHealth Medical Center is seen Saturday, Feb. 29, 2020, where a person died of COVID-19, in Kirkland, Wash. State health officials announced the death Saturday, marking the first such reported death in the United States. Gov. Jay Inslee directed state agencies to use "all resources necessary" to prepare for and respond to the outbreak. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)



An ambulance worker wears protective equipment as she wheels a stretcher into a nursing facility where more than 50 people are sick and being tested for the COVID-19 virus, Saturday, Feb. 29, 2020, in Kirkland, Wash. Health officials reported two cases of COVID-19 virus connected to the Life Care Center of Kirkland. One is a Life Care worker, a woman in her 40s who is in satisfactory condition at a hospital, and the other is a woman in her 70s and a resident at Life Care who is hospitalized in serious condition. Neither have traveled out of the country. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)



A sign behind warns of a "respiratory outbreak" as a staff member blocks the view, while a person is taken by a stretcher to a waiting ambulance from a nursing facility where more than 50 people are sick and being tested for the COVID-19 virus, Saturday, Feb. 29, 2020, in Kirkland, Wash. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)



Dr. Jeff Duchin, Health Officer, Public Health – Seattle & King County, addresses a news conference, Saturday, Feb. 29, 2020, in Seattle. A man in his 50s with underlying health conditions became the first coronavirus death on U.S. soil. The man had underlying health conditions and no history of travel or contact with a known COVID-19 case, health officials in Washington state said. A spokesperson for EvergreenHealth Medical Center said the person died in the facility in the Seattle suburb of Kirkland. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)



A man walks his dog past barricades outside Forest Hills Elementary School in Lake Oswego, Ore., on Saturday Feb. 29, 2020 after an employee at the school was diagnosed with the coronavirus on Friday. The school in the Lake Oswego School District south of Portland, Ore., will be closed until Wednesday and other schools and schools buses in the district will be deep-cleaned this weekend. (AP Photo/Gillian Flaccus)



A staff member blocks the view as a person is taken by a stretcher to a waiting ambulance from a nursing facility where more than 50 people are sick and being tested for the COVID-19 virus, Saturday, Feb. 29, 2020, in Kirkland, Wash. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)





In this photo is the Henry M. Jackson High School in Mill Creek, Calif., Saturday, Feb. 29, 2020. Washington state health officials announced two other new coronavirus cases Friday night, including a high school student who attends the Jackson High School, said Dr. Chris Spitters of the Snohomish County Health District. Gov. Jay Inslee directed state agencies to use "all resources necessary" to prepare for and respond to the coronavirus outbreak. (Amanda Snyder/The Seattle Times via AP)



The first known death in the U.S. due to the coronavirus occurred at EvergreenHealth Medical Center in Kirkland, Wash. The man who died was in his 50s, had underlying health conditions and no history of travel or contact with a known COVID-19 case, health officials in Washington state said at a news conference. A spokesperson for EvergreenHealth, Kayse Dahl, said the person died in the facility in the Seattle suburb of Kirkland. (Dean Rutz/The Seattle Times via AP)



A few cases of the coronavirus have been reported at the long-term care facility, Life Care Center of Kirkland, Saturday, Feb. 29, 2020. Other individuals at the facility who are reportedly ill with respiratory symptoms or hospitalized with pneumonia or other respiratory conditions of unknown cause and are being tested for COVID-19, Seattle and King County officials said. (Dean Rutz/The Seattle Times via AP)



Officials prepare for a news conference at Public Health – Seattle & King County Saturday, Feb. 29, 2020, in Seattle. A man in his 50s with underlying health conditions became the first coronavirus death on U.S. soil. The man had underlying health conditions and no history of travel or contact with a known COVID-19 case, health officials in Washington state said. A spokesperson for EvergreenHealth Medical Center said the person died in the facility in the Seattle suburb of Kirkland. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)



Antonia Lopez, a contract phlebotomist, takes a break from her work at Life Care Center of Kirkland, a nursing facility where more than 50 people are sick and being tested for the COVID-19 virus, Saturday, Feb. 29, 2020, in Kirkland, Wash. Health officials reported two cases of COVID-19 virus connected to the Life Care Center of Kirkland. One is a Life Care worker, a woman in her 40s who is in satisfactory condition at a hospital, and the other is a woman in her 70s and a resident at Life Care who is hospitalized in serious condition. Neither have traveled out of the country. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)



Shoppers visit a Costco Wholesale in Tigard, Ore., Saturday, Feb. 29, 2020, after reports of Oregon's first case of coronavirus was announced in the nearby Oregon city of Lake Oswego on Friday. (AP Photo/Gillian Flaccus)



Shoppers visit a Costco Wholesale in Tigard, Ore., Saturday, Feb. 29, 2020, after reports of Oregon's first case of coronavirus was announced in the nearby Oregon city of Lake Oswego on Friday. (AP Photo/Gillian Flaccus)

The case "highlights the vulnerability of the nation's hospitals to this virus," the union said.

Washington state health officials announced two other new coronavirus cases Friday night, including a high school student who attends Jackson High School in Everett, said Dr. Chris Spitters of the Snohomish County Health District.

The other case in Washington was a woman in in King County in her 50s

who had recently traveled to South Korea, authorities said. Neither patient was seriously ill.

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