Gov. Whitmer lays out Michigan's plan to fight coronavirus

LANSING, MI. (WILX) - Governor Gretchen Whitmer announced Friday that she activated the State Emergency Operations Center to coordinate with state, local and federal agencies to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

Gov. Whitmer gave the update on the state's efforts at 8 a.m.

Whitmer was surrounded by the state's top public safety and health officials, who said the risk of catching the virus was low, but they wanted to take precautions.

"Right now, we're harnessing all of the resources of state government to help people prepare and keep themselves and their families safe," said Governor Whitmer. "By activating the State Emergency Operations Center, we're ensuring that every branch of state government is on alert, and actively coordinating to prevent the spread of Coronavirus if it comes to Michigan. We are taking this step out of an abundance of caution. We will continue to take every necessary precaution to keep Michiganders safe."

She also urged residents to follow simple steps to help limit the spread of the virus that has not been confirmed in Michigan but could be eventually.

People should wash their hands, not touch their face, replace handshakes with elbow or fist bumps and cover their mouth when coughing or sneezing, she said.

"The main goal of these efforts is to help slow the spread of the virus," Whitmer said. "I urge all Michiganders to take these recommendations very seriously and share this information with their friends, family and co-workers."

Whitmer briefed the media after activating the state's emergency operations center near Lansing to coordinate the response to the virus that has infected more than 83,000 globally, killing about 2,800. The illness caused by the coronavirus is called COVID-19.

State officials said more than 350 people in Michigan who traveled from China have been or are being monitored for symptoms — during which they self-quarantine at home for 14 days and limit their travel. None have shown symptoms to date.

Five people who were previously screened for the disease tested negative, said Dr. Joneigh Khaldun, Michigan's chief medical executive.

"While the current risk to the general public of getting COVID-19 is low, we need to use all of our public health tools to make sure we are prepared," said Dr. Joneigh Khaldun, chief medical executive and chief deputy for health for Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS). "Michiganders can be assured that we are taking this seriously and we will continue to make preparations to limit the spread and impact of COVID 19. Everyone can do basic things like washing hands frequently, covering their coughs appropriately, and staying home if they feel unwell to prevent the spread of respiratory viruses."

Patients with confirmed infection have reportedly had mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms of:
• Fever
• Cough
• Shortness of breath

The best prevention for viruses, such as influenza, the common cold or COVID-19 is to:
• Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for 20 seconds. If not available, use hand sanitizer.
• Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
• Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or upper sleeve when coughing or sneezing.
• Avoid contact with people who are sick.
• If you are sick, stay home, and avoid contact with others.

If you missed Gov. Whitmer's update, you can find the full video below, and on the WILX News 10 Facebook page here.