

## Gov. Walz enters self-quarantine after contact with COVID-19

**Monday, March 23:** Gov. Tim Walz announced on Monday, March 23, he will self-quarantine for a period of 14 days after learning he had contact with an individual who tested positive for COVID-19. The governor was informed of the contact early on Monday morning and has not left his home since.

“The most important thing Minnesotans can do to stop the spread of COVID-19 is to stay home,” said Walz. “I’m using this as an opportunity to lead by example. Though I’m feeling healthy and not showing any symptoms, I’m going to work from home and model the protocol we are asking all Minnesotans to follow.”

A member of the Governor’s security detail tested positive for COVID-19 late on Sunday, March 22. The governor was in close proximity to this individual late last week. While the governor is not showing any symptoms, he will begin his self-quarantine on Monday, March 23, until Monday, April 6.

The Center for Disease Control recommends that individuals who have a known contact with COVID-19 self-quarantine for a period of 14 days as a precautionary measure to avoid accidentally spreading the virus. The Minnesota Department of Health recently recommended that all Minnesotans work remotely when possible. “Because our state must maintain essential services, not every Minnesotan is able to stay home,” continued Walz. “Those of us who are able to work from home must do so out of respect to our health care professionals, first responders, pharmacists, grocers, childcare providers, and all Minnesotans who are working to keep us safe during this crisis.”

The governor will continue to oversee the State of Minnesota’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic. “I’m grateful for the State of Minnesota’s sophisticated emergency management operation that allows me to govern and respond to crises from the Minnesota Governor’s Residence,” continued Walz. “We will continue to communicate with Minnesotans about our quick and aggressive work to combat the spread of COVID-19.”

## Walz orders suspension of eviction proceedings

**Monday, March 23:** Governor Tim Walz signed Executive Orders 20-14, 20-15, 20-16, and 20-17 to further strengthen Minnesota’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These executive orders suspend evictions during the peacetime emergency, establish Peacetime Emergency Loans for small businesses, direct non-hospital entities to conduct an inventory of personal protective equipment, and clarifies that Executive Order 20-09 on elective surgeries and procedures applies to veterinarians.

Providing housing stability for Minnesota families at a time of financial uncertainty, Walz signed Executive Order 20-14 to suspend eviction proceedings during the COVID-19 peacetime emergency. Loss of housing is catastrophic at any time, and during the COVID-19 pandemic, this loss endangers the health and well-being of all Minnesotans. While this order clarifies that tenants who can continue to pay rent during the peacetime emergency should continue to do so, landlords and financial institutions cannot begin eviction proceedings that would remove tenants from stable housing.

Executive Order 20-15 authorizes the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) to establish a Small Business Emergency Loan program for small businesses affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Minnesota’s small businesses and independent contractors are amongst the worst hit by the pandemic. DEED’s emergency loan program will help Minnesota small business owners who need immediate assistance during COVID-19 closures.

As hospitals and health care providers report shortages of personal protective equipment, Governor Walz signed Executive Order 20-16 directing all non-hospital entities to conduct an inventory of their personal protective equipment, ventilators, respirators, and anesthesia machines, report the result to the state, and either donate such equipment to a local coordinating entity or preserve it. On Saturday, Walz directed the National Guard to transport personal protective equipment from storage at Camp Ripley to the Department of Health.

Also on Monday, March 23, the governor announced a revised supplemental budget, allocating an additional \$356 million toward the state’s COVID-19 response.

## Vibrant offering first three months free for students

**Friday, March 20:** Meeker Cooperative wants to help students continue their education through this time of crisis. To help families stay connected with the fastest Internet speeds, Meeker Coop, with its new Vibrant broadband, has developed a new program called “VIBRANT-U Education Scholarship” where offering the first three months of service free, with free standard installation.

“Meeker Cooperative has been servicing the rural community for 85 years with electricity. Our next commitment is servicing our rural communities with high-speed Internet access using the most current technologies available,” said Meeker Cooperative CEO Tim Mergen. “This also means we step up in times of need. We are offering our VIBRANT-U Education Scholarship program to help families with students forced to continue their learning from home.”

The VIBRANT-U Education Scholarship programs offers three free months of the essential package of 25 Mbps download with 3 Mbps upload service. Standard installation is also free. This is any fixed wireless system or the direct fiber to the home (up to 800 feet from one of Meeker’s fiber-optic splice points). A three-year service commitment is required.

## Income tax now due July 15, instead of April 15, per IRS

**Saturday, March 21:** The Treasury Department and the Internal Revenue Service announced on Saturday, March 21, that the federal income tax filing due date is automatically extended from April 15, 2020, to July 15, 2020.

Taxpayers can also defer federal income tax payments due on April 15, 2020, to July 15, 2020, without penalties and interest, regardless of the amount owed. This deferment applies to all taxpayers, including individuals, trusts and estates, corporations, and other non-corporate tax filers, as well as those who pay self-employment tax.

Taxpayers do not need to file any additional forms or call the IRS to qualify for this automatic federal tax filing and payment relief. Individual taxpayers who need additional time to file beyond the July 15 deadline can request a filing extension by filing Form 4868 through their tax professional, tax software, or using the “Free File” link on [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov). Businesses who need additional time must file Form 7004.

The IRS urges taxpayers who are due a refund to file as soon as possible. Most tax refunds are being issued within 21 days.

“Even with the filing deadline extended, we urge taxpayers who are owed refunds to file as soon as possible and file electronically,” said IRS commissioner Chuck Rettig. “Filing electronically with direct deposit is the quickest way to get refunds. Although we are curtailing some operations during this period, the IRS is continuing with mission-critical operations to support the nation, and that includes accepting tax returns and sending refunds. As a federal agency vital to the overall operations of our country, we ask for your personal support, your understanding – and your patience. I’m incredibly proud of our employees as we navigate through numerous different challenges in this very rapidly changing environment.”

The IRS will continue to monitor issues related to the COVID-19 virus, and updated information will be posted on a special coronavirus page on [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov).

This announcement comes following the president’s emergency declaration last week pursuant to the Stafford Act. The Stafford Act is a federal law designed to bring an orderly and systematic means of federal natural disaster and emergency assistance for state and local governments in carrying out their responsibilities to aid citizens. It was enacted in 1988.

## Stearns County seeking donations for coronavirus

**Monday, March 23:** The local health care community is reaching out to the public to ask for donations for much-needed items, announced Stearns County on Monday, March 23. They are looking for personal protective equipment (PPE), including surgical masks, N95 masks, goggles, safety goggles, powered-air purified respirators, face shields, home-made masks and face shields, and scrubs. These items will be used by area health professionals, including first responders, to help fight coronavirus. All items must be new.

“We are working to get the equipment to where we need it most,” said Renee Frauendienst, Stearns County public health division director. “This is a great way for people to do something for their neighbor.”

Anyone who has any of these items to donate, in any quantity, please call the Stearns/Benton coronavirus hotline at 320-656-6625 or 1-877-782-5683. Hotline staff will direct people on how and where to donate the equipment. Anyone sewing masks is asked to call the hotline as well to learn how to donate these items. Stearns County’s Emergency Management Department will disburse collected gear to the local health care facilities.

## Dollar General seeking to hire amidst COVID-19 demand

**Monday, March 23:** As the heightened demand for household essentials offered by Dollar General stores continues across the country amid COVID-19 concerns, the company plans to nearly double its normal hiring rate and add up to 50,000 employees by the end of April as it continues to diligently work to support customers’ needs. “We are proud to serve as one of America’s essential retailers, and we believe our customers are relying on us now more than ever to provide an affordable, convenient retail option,” said Kathy Reardon, Dollar General’s senior vice president and chief people officer. “The Dollar General family continues to do its part in helping our customers and neighbors during these unprecedented times. We invite individuals looking to start or grow a career, as well as for those whose job may be temporarily impacted by COVID-19, to apply for opportunities to help further our mission of serving others.”

While Dollar General currently anticipates the majority of these roles to be temporary, the company has a strong track record of career growth and anticipates providing long-term career growth opportunities to some of these new employees. In the past five years alone, Dollar General has added approximately 35,000 net new jobs to the American economy, growing its workforce from 105,000 employees in February 2015 to more than 143,000 current employees.

Dollar General currently operates more than 16,300 stores in 45 states, and approximately 75 percent of the American population is within five miles of a Dollar General. The company has area stores in Belgrade, Eden Valley, Paynesville, and Richmond. Dollar General is also asking for high-risk and senior customers to be allowed to shop the first hour of every day – 8 to 9 a.m. in Eden Valley and Paynesville.