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**Johnson County Department of Health and Environment
announces its first death from COVID-19**

JOHNSON COUNTY, KAN. (March 21, 2020) – The Johnson County Department of Health and Environment (JCDHE) is reporting its first death of a resident from the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). The person who died was a male, in his 70s who was hospitalized and had no history of travel. He did have underlying health conditions. The county currently has 26 positive cases of coronavirus, including the death.

Dr. Sanmi Areola, director of JCDHE also urges residents to stay safe and healthy.

"This is a tragic loss of life and we share our heartfelt condolences with the family," said Dr. Areola. "While the vast majority of cases of COVID-19 are believed to be mild, the virus can cause a very serious infection that can lead to death, especially in people over age 60 and those with underlying medical conditions."

Areola says that protecting the health of our community and slowing the spread of COVID-19 is the department's top priority. Earlier this week, Dr. Joseph LeMaster, JCDHE's health officer, ordered the closing of all Johnson County schools. In a separate order, he closed restaurants, bars, taverns, clubs and movie theaters for 15 days, with the exception of carry-out, delivery and drive-throughs. Dr. LeMaster also limited the number of people at public gatherings to 10. An earlier exception to that order included weddings, religious and faith-based gatherings and funerals. That exemption has since been rescinded.

"I know this news is alarming, but we are doing everything possible to make sure the public is safe. I urge businesses and families to take health precautions and practice physical distancing. Work from home, if possible, wash your hands and disinfect surfaces frequently, and stay home when you are sick," said Areola.

(more)

Earlier this week, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment issued a 14-day home quarantine mandate for Kansans who have traveled to California, Florida, New York and Washington State, traveled internationally, or traveled on a cruise ship or river cruise on or after March 15. Those who traveled to Eagle, Summit, Pitkin and Gunnison counties in Colorado on or after March 8 should also quarantine at home.

If the public has general questions about COVID-19 they can call the Johnson County Community Hotline at 913-715-2819, Monday-Friday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. or visit www.cdc.gov/COVID19 or www.jocogov.org/coronavirus.

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