

Statement from BOP Director

BOP response to COVID-19 pandemic



Updated 3:30 PM ET, March 26, 2020

(BOP) - In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Bureau of Prisons has taken, and will continue to take, aggressive steps to protect the safety and security of all staff and inmates, as well as visitors and members of the public. The Director has made clear that this response is the Bureau's top priority.

The BOP has been working on its coronavirus response plans since January 2020, when we first established a task force. In doing so, the BOP leveraged its well-established experience from actual planning, practice and training. In fact, the BOP has had a Pandemic Influenza plan in place for years; in January, we immediately modified it for COVID-19.

Additionally, as part of the Pandemic Influenza contingency plan, all cleaning, sanitation, and medical supplies have been inventoried. Ample supplies are on hand and ready to be distributed or moved to any facility as deemed necessary. As we continue to respond, the Bureau has placed additional orders for these supplies, in case of a protracted event.

All BOP institutions have been directed to follow guidance developed by our subject matter experts and based on guidance from the Office of the Vice President, the World Health Organization (WHO), the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). We will continue to monitor and ensure that this guidance is being appropriately followed.

At BOP, we are fully committed to carrying out our law enforcement mission and are dedicated to carrying out our oath of office during this public health emergency. I am committed to supporting all staff who steadfastly carry out the agency mission and I have requested that our union representatives work with us in educating staff so that they can be a source of calm for all staff and inmates.

The BOP has thus far been fortunate in that our rate of COVID-19 infection is remarkably low. As of March 26, out of over 146,000 inmates in our custody, ten inmates have tested positive. Out of over 36,000 staff, eight staff have tested positive. We believe that the low number of cases to this point, in a system this large, is a testament to our effective planning and execution to-date.

That said, as warned by the Surgeon General of the United States, we expect to have more cases as the virus continues to spread in the general community. We will continue to diligently support all persons system-wide while doing everything we can to do our part in mitigating the spread of the virus.