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**COVID-19 RELEASE No. 1
Saturday, March 14, 2020 – 2:30 p.m.**

The Rappahannock County Office of Emergency Management is monitoring the potential effects of the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) on our community. Governor Ralph Northam issued a Statewide Declaration of Emergency on Thursday, March 12 in response to the Pandemic COVID-19. This statewide action will allow for heightened monitoring and alternate resource acquisition and distribution.

COVID-19 is a “novel” virus and overall impacts are without precedent. As such, the Rappahannock County Office of Emergency Management and the Board of Supervisors are planning and preparing for unknown conditions. Current proactive measures include planning efforts with the seven volunteer fire and rescue companies and E911-dispatch to coordinate operations and anticipate potential needs.

At the time of this release there are no known cases of COVID-19 in Rappahannock County.

The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) is the lead managing agency in the state for the overall COVID-19 incident with input and collaboration with the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM). Rappahannock County citizens are encouraged to plan for potential impacts from COVID-19 by using the best practices released by VDH and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) on their respective websites:

VDH: www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus Or by telephone: (877) -ASK-VDH3
CDC: www.coronavirus.gov (877) -275-8343

Key protective actions recommended by VDH and the CDC include:

- Clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces frequently
- Clean your hands often and avoid touching your face with your hands
- Avoid close contact with people who are or may be sick
- Stay at home if you are sick and call ahead to your physician before visiting to get detailed instructions

Taking the recommended measures can help slow the spread of COVID-19 thereby lowering the peak number of infected individuals at one time. Reducing the peak number of infected individuals by spreading infections over a longer duration will help our health providers (doctors, hospitals, etc.) keep up with the number of infected individuals needing care.

Governor Northam has taken certain actions to limit the interaction of Virginia citizens in large groups in support of the goal of reducing the peak number of individuals infected. Most notably, as a precautionary measure, he has ordered that all public schools close from Monday, March 16, through Friday, March 27.

Citizens should prepare now by researching FACTS and recommendations available from the VDH and the CDC and adjust normal behaviors to align with recommended best practice. Citizens should also carefully consider limiting exposure to large groups (particularly citizens who may have compromised immune systems).

The Rappahannock County Office of Emergency Management will continue to monitor the incident and provide updates as additional information becomes available.