

COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE

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February 10, 2020

To the community,

As many of you know, March Air Reserve Base (MARB) has been hosting a group of 195 passengers who arrived at the base January 29 after arriving from China. They have been under a 14-day quarantine that is set to expire February 11.

The group — many of whom work for the U.S. State Department or are related to someone who does — have been isolated from base personnel and were not permitted to leave the fenced quarantine area.

Only official medical staff, such as health care workers with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and nurses from Riverside University Health System-Public Health (RUHS-PH), have been in direct contact with the former passengers. They have conducted temperature checks and watched for possible symptoms. At the end of the 14-day period, people who have not developed symptoms will have successfully completed their quarantine and will be free to leave.

To date, no one has tested positive for novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) among the 195 in quarantine. Two individuals with symptoms were retested and also found to be negative, and have since recovered.

We have heard your concerns about the evacuees on the base. Many of these concerns are reasonable. Unfortunately, some people with these concerns have taken them out on the families and households of people working at March Air Reserve Base. There have been comments made that have been hurtful — both in person and on social media — that are often based on incorrect or incomplete information. A few base workers have even been accosted in uniform. This is not acceptable, and needs to stop.

Please understand that people on and off the base are *not* at increased risk for exposure to the new virus, and we don't restrict people who don't actually pose any risk. They have had no contact with the evacuees, whose area is fully separated from base personnel. You do not need to exclude household or family members of MARB personnel, nor do you need to require them to obtain unnecessary "clearance letters" from a physician or health authority. They pose no greater risk than anyone else.

We understand your concerns about exposure to 2019-nCoV and Riverside County is committed to protecting the health and safety of its residents. We are working with state and federal partners to take every precaution to protect this community, and will take immediate action if any person being monitored develops symptoms of 2019-nCoV. So far no cases of nCoV have been detected, and we don't expect it to happen, but we are ready if it does.

At this time, we continue to believe the risk of novel coronavirus exposure to our community is low. For the latest information about 2019 novel coronavirus, please visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus>

Thank you,

Cameron Kaiser, MD, MPH, FAAFP
Public Health Officer
County of Riverside