

Team Sheppard,

Today I have directed that Sheppard Air Force Base implement Health Protection Condition (HPCON) Alpha. My intent is to increase our focus on preparation and prevention as we address the continuing COVID-19 situation. This was not driven by any significant change in the current situation – it remains the case that we do not have any cases of COVID-19 on base or in our community.

However, it is important that we continue and even increase our attention and effort. Many of the tasks associated with this move will fall to our amazing medical team, who have been doing an incredible job and working long hours to keep us informed and ready. See the graphic below for specifics on our HPCON levels. This is a move from HPCON “0” (normal) to HPCON-A.

There are some things that will affect you, and that you need to do:

- You’ve already noticed the change at the gates as we’ve implemented a “no exchange” ID policy. Please be patient at the gates.
- Continue and even increase the focus on good hand hygiene – wash hands frequently, use hand sanitizer and avoid touching your face.
- In the same vein, please suspend handshakes and other kinds of social contact; that goes against some of our cultural norms but it’s important.
- Be intentional about social distancing, even in your normal daily interactions. If you don’t absolutely have to be closer than six feet, then don’t be.
- Increase your efforts to disinfect commonly touched or used surfaces and objects, preferably using a bleach solution.
- Limit gathering in groups as much as possible, and use virtual means to hold meetings and other contacts whenever you can.
- If you are sick, please stay home, and avoid contact with others who are sick as much as possible.
- If there are people in your work centers who are at higher risk, such as those over age 60 or who have other health conditions that may weaken their immune system, please be especially mindful of them. Consider telework wherever possible and look for creative ways to limit their exposure to others.

Now, some people may wonder why we are doing all this. First this is an unknown virus with no vaccine that medical professionals are still trying to understand. The concept you need to remember is, “flatten the curve.” The intent of all of the bold actions you have seen across our nation – from cancelling professional sporting events to school closings – is to slow down the spread of COVID-19 so that our healthcare system does not get overwhelmed.

Consider what has happened over the last couple of weeks as everyone went to the stores at the same time to get toilet paper and hand sanitizer this past week. Now imagine the same thing happening at our hospitals, except that instead of toilet paper and hand sanitizer, we’re talking about shortages of intensive care beds and ventilators.

Our individual and collective actions can help “flatten the curve” so that our healthcare system and healthcare workers can better manage the impact of COVID-19, and, ultimately, save lives. It’s not just about you, and how the disease might affect you – it’s about our families, our neighbors and our communities. Service Before Self is one of our core values. Right now, that

means being part of an effort to slow the spread of COVID-19 in ways that might be inconvenient or even challenging. But it's the right thing to do, so please take this seriously.

Thank you for all you do, and please take care of yourselves, your families, and your coworkers & neighbors. We are a resilient force! We are more than capable of overcoming this challenge... but we have to do it together.

Sincerely

Col Bell

KENYON K. BELL, Colonel, USAF

Installation Commander

Sheppard AFB TX