

Team Sheppard,

Our posture and prevention efforts continue to ramp up as we battle this invisible enemy, the novel coronavirus 2019 (COVID19). Here is an update on our next step.

The Secretary of the Air Force has directed that all Air Force installations implement Health Protection Condition (HPCON) Charlie. This is in keeping with similar actions taken by our sister services. This puts all military installations in the same posture as we collectively work to meet the Secretary of Defense's three priorities in fighting COVID-19:

1. Protect our people and their families
2. Ensure our ability to conduct essential missions in defense of the nation
3. Support the all-government effort against Coronavirus

At the same time, to ensure that all available measures and authorities are at our disposal here, I will declare a Public Health Emergency for Sheppard AFB. This will also keep our activities and efforts in harmony with our surrounding communities, which have taken similar actions in recent days. We continue to stay linked with the ongoing efforts of the Health District.

Now, what does this mean for Team Sheppard?

First, I ask everyone to continue your emphasis and efforts to observe, enforce and educate others on these critical steps each of us can take individually to prevent the spread of the virus. These include:

- Wash your hands often; use hand sanitizer when you cannot wash
- Practice social distancing; yes, it's hard to do in the training environment, but we must do our best
- Suspend travel, even local travel
- If you are sick, stay home; call ahead to your medical provider before seeking care – unless you have an emergency, then always call 911
- Clean and disinfect frequently used or touched objects and surfaces
- Take Care of Each Other. "Social distancing doesn't mean we aren't together!"

In regard to suspending travel, and per the Secretary of the Air Force's guidance, I am directing all military members to limit local travel. Effective immediately, when off base, military members (active duty, Guard and Reserve) assigned to Sheppard may only:

- Travel to and from work
- Travel to purchase necessary groceries and perform essential tasks
- Travel to receive medical or hospital care

Civilian employees are strongly encouraged to adhere to the same restrictions. This measure is designed to limit potential spread of COVID-19 while also preserving our ability to conduct the base's essential missions.

Wing and installation leaders are considering further measures, which will be announced in the coming days. These may include additional base access restrictions, changes in operations at the exchange and commissary and other measures. These are necessary decisions to protect our base and local population.

I am extremely proud of the women and men of Team Sheppard and how they have shown patience, flexibility, determination and resilience as we continue our efforts to flatten the curve and slow the spread of COVID-19. Dynamic challenges are being tossed our way right now. This is the time to stand strong in what we know and stay together. Stay informed and adhere to guidelines. Your chain of command is still the best place to receive the most accurate information.

As long as we continue to support each other, communicate openly and stay focused, we will be successful in the effort to #ConquerCOVID19. In the end, #WeWin. Until it manifests itself, stay strong in the fight!

Sincerely

Col Bell

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