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NEW RIVER HEALTH DISTRICT CONFIRMS FIRST FATALITY ASSOCIATED WITH COVID-19

(BLACKSBURG, Virginia) -- The Virginia Department of Health's New River Health District announced that a resident of the district who was ill with COVID-19 has died.

"We regret to announce that we have experienced our first local COVID-19-related fatality," said Noelle Bissell, M.D., director of the New River Health District. "On behalf of all of us at VDH, I extend sincere condolences to this person's family."

"Unfortunately, we've learned that those over 65 and those with underlying health conditions are at greater risk of serious complications from COVID-19," said Dr. Bissell. "Everyone, especially at-risk individuals, are strongly advised to take steps to minimize contact with others who are ill, practice social distancing and stay at home as much as possible."

In some patients, especially those at-risk patients, COVID-19 can lead to more severe illness, including death, particularly among those who are older or those who have chronic medical conditions, like diabetes, heart or lung disease or compromised immune systems.

To lower the risk of spreading respiratory infections, including COVID-19, the Virginia Department of Health encourages everyone to:

- Stay home as much as possible, except for essential travel;
- If you must go out in public, wear a cloth face covering;
- Stay home when you are sick;
- Avoid contact with sick people;
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing;
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds; use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available;
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth;
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces;
- If you are experiencing symptoms, call your doctor;
- Practice social distancing. Maintain at least six feet of space between yourself and other individuals when out in public; and
- Avoid close contact with crowds of any size, and avoid any crowd of more than 10 people.

For more information on COVID-19 in Virginia, visit www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus and www.cdc.gov/coronavirus.

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(NOTE: This fatality is not yet reflected in the VDH website dashboard, which is updated each morning.)