

## Positive Test for Kent Firefighter

The City of Kent learned late Thursday night that one of our Kent firefighters had tested positive for COVID-19, also known as the coronavirus. The employee is not a Portage County resident and is therefore counted as an additional case in another county. While this development is unfortunate, it is not completely unexpected.

Our thoughts go out to the firefighter and his family, and we wish him a speedy and complete recovery. He has advised us that he and his family are doing fine. This is an all too real reminder of how important it is to be vigilant in following the guidelines to limit exposure and contain this virus.

We recognize the concern that as a firefighter/paramedic, this employee may have had significant interaction with people within the community. Fortunately, the employee took appropriate action after developing symptoms and has been off work since March 8<sup>th</sup>. Kent paramedics began wearing protective masks even earlier than that, and those actions have even further reduced the risk of exposure to patients. Despite that, we immediately began researching all of the calls and medical runs this employee had been on in order to identify any citizens at risk. We will continue to investigate this.

Our Unified Command in response to COVID-19 has been planning for these developments. We have been preparing for cases in Portage County and among Kent employees not as a matter of "if" but "when." We are cognizant of the risk to other firefighters this employee had contact with, and we are addressing those employees and those potential cases. We have temporarily closed the west side fire station for cleaning, and those other employees potentially exposed are being isolated. We still have plenty of staff to handle calls for service out of Kent Fire Station 1. We have planned for reduced staffing without reduced service.

The precautionary measures the City of Kent put in place have limited potential spread and we have closely monitored employees for any symptoms. We have restricted personal interaction, increased cleaning and sanitation practices, taken employees' temperatures at least twice a shift, and numerous other measures. We will continue to make the health and safety of our residents and our employees our number one priority.