

# FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **MDOC confirms one COVID-19 case among inmates**

JACKSON – The Mississippi Department of Corrections has confirmed one case of COVID-19 in the inmate population.

The inmate was housed at the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman and has died. The inmate, who had underlying health conditions, was tested when he began exhibiting symptoms and was immediately medically isolated pending results. The results did not come in until after the inmate had died. Whether the inmate died because of the coronavirus has not been determined.

Upon learning of the one inmate positive test, the department immediately took steps to prevent the spread of the virus, Interim Commissioner Tommy Taylor said.

“We are committed to protecting the health and well-being of all within our system,” Taylor said. “Since the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, our facilities have been under quarantine with restricted transfers, no visitations other than attorneys, and daily screening of facility staff. With this first positive case, we have further isolated all the affected areas and increased screenings for all the inmates who came in contact with the individual. Inmates who came in close contact with the positive individual have been provided with masks.”

Additionally, the inmates in the enhanced quarantined locations will be monitored twice a day for any signs or symptoms of the virus, and all frequently touched areas, such as workstations, countertops, doorknobs, light switches, handrails, and computer keyboards are being sanitized regularly.

Taylor said the MDOC continues to work with the Governor’s Office, the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), and the Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH) to protect public health.

The department remains in regular contact with the MSDH to ensure recommended health guidelines are being implemented. The department’s testing guidelines for inmates are the same as for the general public.

The department is continuing to emphasize recommended guidelines for hygiene and social distancing from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and MSDH. Other previously announced preventive measures in place include daily screening of staff; suspended intra-transfer of inmates; suspended visitation, except for attorney visits; and increased sanitization following those visits.

“The inmates under quarantine are not on lockdown, but they are not going to work or school,” Taylor said. “We are letting inmates know we are concerned about their health and will continue to make adjustments in our protocols as needed to ensure their safety.”