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## DOH REITERATES CALL FOR LGUS TO ENSURE PREVENTION OF COVID-19 SPREAD IN EVACUATION CENTERS

**Press Release | 02 November 2020**

The Department of Health today strongly advised the public to continue practicing minimum health standards and reiterated its call for Local Government Units (LGUs) to designate safety officers in evacuation centers and implement measures to prevent COVID-19 transmission

Health Secretary Francisco T. Duque, during the NDRRMC national briefing detailed the responsibilities of these safety officers in preventing the spread of COVID-19, saying “Sila po ang magsagawa ng symptoms screening, clinical and exposure assessment of evacuees para madaliang matukoy at ma-isolate ang mga suspect and probable cases.”

Sec. Duque further emphasized the need for LGUs to protect vulnerable evacuees by separating them, and to immediately isolate symptomatic evacuees. If possible, the Secretary suggested that a “one family, one classroom or tent” policy should be adopted to prevent disease transmission and maintain proper room ventilation.

“Bigyan ng hiwalay na silid ang mga high risk individuals tulad ng mga edad 60 pataas, may mga karamdaman, buntis at may mga bata. I-isolate din ang mga may sintomas sa TTMF o sa hiwalay na silid o evacuation center,” he said.

During the national briefing, Health Secretary Francisco T. Duque III also revealed that the primary concern of the DOH now is the unstable communication lines, and irregular power and water supply in the Bicol Region. He added that most health care personnel in the region were also victims of heavy flooding, flash floods and lahar flow and were not able to report for work. Another problem is the potential disruption of cold chain management should there be a prolonged power shortage.

To address these issues, the DOH will conduct rapid damage assessment of the hospitals and other facilities in affected barangays once the flooding subsides to determine their safety and to provide the necessary assistance. DOH will also provide mental health services and psychosocial support to personnel directly affected by the typhoon, and will augment staffing to ensure continuity of healthcare services in the region.

Furthermore, Sec. Duque clarified that immediate responders assisting affected regions or localities need not be tested for COVID-19 as long as they have undergone complete physical/medical examination and certified by a physician to be asymptomatic and with no history of exposure to a confirmed, suspect, or probable case.

“Nais po naming linawin na hindi kinakailangang sumailalim sa testing ang ating mga responders as long as sila ay asymptomatic at walang history of exposure to a confirmed or probable case as certified by a physician,” Sec. Duque said.

“Makakasiguro po tayo na hindi ito magiging sanhi ng pagkalat ng COVID-19, ngunit kinakailangan ang pagpapahigpit ng compliance sa minimum public health standards,” he said, adding that first responders will strictly adhere to established infection prevention and control protocols including wearing appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

In closing, the Health Chief reiterated his advice to strictly adhere to minimum public health standards no matter where they are, saying “Wash hands with soap and water, proper wearing of face masks at all times, practice proper cough and sneeze etiquette, and maintain physical distance in evacuation centers and even at home.”

“Consult a doctor immediately if you manifest symptoms like cough, sore throat, difficulty in breathing or dizziness. For those who waded in floodwater, immediately consult the nearest health center for post-exposure prophylaxis against leptospirosis,” Sec. Duque concluded.