



# Kootenai County Office of Emergency Management



## MEDIA RELEASE

**For Immediate Release:**

**Date: April 7, 2020**

**Contact: Sgt Chris Wagar**

**Office: 208-446-2293**

**PIO Cell: 208-758-1045**

[sopio@kcgov.us](mailto:sopio@kcgov.us)

**Coeur d' Alene** – There was a recent letter to the editor of the Coeur d' Alene Press calling out elected officials for not being the out-in-front leaders, the writer expects. It's important to note city and county leadership have done exactly what they needed to do, declare emergency status, and let the people who manage crisis do their work.

Chris Way, the Chief of the Kootenai County Emergency Medical Services System and Ben Wolfinger, the Kootenai County Sheriff are sharing unified command duties in the Emergency Operations Center (EOC). The center is staffed with personnel from Kootenai County and the various local fire districts and departments, as well as volunteers who have been specially trained to the various functions necessary in the EOC. These are the people who are scouring the country for the necessary equipment and supplies our first responders and health care workers need. They are the people who are the coordination point for local supplies going to those on the front line of battling this disease. These are the people who on a daily basis are coordinating the message between Panhandle Health, Kootenai Health and the Emergency Operations Center about what is happening with regard to COVID-19, so the information is accurate and uniform. Additionally, Chief Way and Sheriff Wolfinger are in regular contact with the Incident Commanders at both Panhandle Health and Kootenai Health, so our efforts are coordinated and not duplicated; while also working with local non-profits to address the COVID-19 pandemic as it applies to our homeless population.

Local elected officials are invited and participate, in a briefing call three times a week to stay up to speed with what the EOC is working on. We appreciate the trust and belief our local mayors and County Commissioners place in Chris and Ben and the rest of the EOC staff and volunteers who continue to address this pandemic in coordination with the Panhandle Health District and Kootenai Health.

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5500 N Government Way PO Box 9000  
Coeur d' Alene, ID 83815

Phone: 208-446-1775 Email: [kcoem@kcgov.us](mailto:kcoem@kcgov.us) Web: [www.oem.kcgov.us](http://www.oem.kcgov.us)