

Town Council approves emergency resolution with spread of COVID-19

By Jenna Hunt, Hi-Desert Star - Mar 18, 2020 Updated Mar 19, 2020



County fire department crews will respond to medical calls wearing gloves, protective masks and gowns or suits. The added equipment will provide additional protection to the public, patient and first responders.



County Fire Chief Dan Munsey gives a presentation during the council meeting Tuesday, March 17.

YUCCA VALLEY — It is not business as usual in the town as the Town Council approved a resolution Tuesday proclaiming an emergency due to COVID-19.

The resolution makes the town eligible for emergency money from the state, county and federal governments.

The council approved the resolution in a special meeting called Tuesday afternoon just before the regularly scheduled meeting.

“The town is ready,” said Town Manager Curtis Yakimow.

Once the regular council meeting started, the conversations about COVID-19 continued and the full council listened to Yakimow, county fire Battalion Chief Scott Tuttle and new Sheriff’s Capt. Lucas Niles share details of how their workers are adding protections to prevent the spread of the new coronavirus.

“The goal is to flatten the curve and slow the process,” Tuttle said. “So far, we have not had any high-risk (911 calls) in Yucca Valley or the Morongo Basin.”

All government officials said the COVID-19 virus will not affect service or staffing levels in town.

All town employees are considered essential, and will continue working; firefighters and deputies will take necessary precautions against contracting the virus, but staffing levels have not changed.

Tuttle shared how the fire department is responding to COVID-19.

He and others warned the public not to be surprised to see first responders wearing protective gear looks like it came from a science fiction movie. The gear is the best way to help the first responders and the public, they said.

County Fire Chief Dan Munsey also addressed coronavirus exposure. He said he was 18 years old when the Landers earthquake hit, but he has not seen this type of crisis professionally.

“I’ve never seen a pandemic take place like this,” he said.

He said he was glad to see the council members sitting far apart and the chairs in the room also spaced 6 feet apart. He told people to wash their hands, keep social distances and be careful to avoid potential exposure.

“This could happen in Yucca Valley,” Munsey said. “Earthquakes happen and so does the coronavirus.”

Munsey said the county’s firefighters will be dressed in protective gear when they arrive at people’s home for medical help.

“We’re taking this seriously and protecting our first responders,” Munsey said.

Yakimow said this new public threat not only affects the public’s health and safety, but it will affect the town’s finances, revenue sources and savings.

“The town financially is very secure,” he said, adding that the impacts “will be painful.”

Yakimow said the town’s strong reserve balance and conservative budget would help the town. He advised the town’s revenues will suffer as sales taxes, transient occupancy taxes and other sources of money drop.

“We don’t know what the impact will be yet,” Yakimow said. “We can assure you there will be financial impacts.”

The town also showed a video of county Supervisor Curt Hagman cautioning the public on coronavirus.

“This is a historical time and requires historic action,” Hagman said. “The county is taking every step to stay ahead of this threat.”

Hagman said that testing will be made available in San Bernardino County.

As of Wednesday, the county has reported three people testing positive for the virus.