

Inland residents told to stay home as coronavirus cases rise



Dining tables and closed stores are empty at Victoria Gardens in Rancho Cucamonga on Wednesday, March 18, 2020. (Photo by Watchara Phomicinda, The Press-Enterprise/SCNG)

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Inland counties are not enacting their own stay-at-home orders as the coronavirus crisis continues, but leaders on Friday, March 20, urged the Inland Empire's 4 million-plus residents to follow Gov. Gavin Newsom's directive [that all Californians stay at home to limit the spread of COVID-19](#).

Riverside County Board of Supervisors Chairman V. Manuel Perez praised the governor's order, saying in a news release that "staying at home is a directive that will save the lives of yourself and your loved ones."

Such reminders to residents came on a day that both counties announced more cases of the coronavirus. In the case of Riverside County, there also was another fatality.

Riverside County officials [confirmed the county's fourth death](#). Like the three before it, Riverside County's fourth COVID-19-related fatality was in the Coachella Valley, according to a news release. No other details were available, but Thursday, the county confirmed one of the deceased [used to live at a Rancho Mirage skilled nursing facility](#). [There were 28 confirmed cases in the county, as of Friday afternoon](#).

[In San Bernardino County, health officials reported nine cases, all recorded since Sunday](#). No one had died as of late Friday.

Newsom's order, issued Thursday night, aimed to prevent coronavirus from overwhelming the state's hospitals.

In a historic directive that underscored the seriousness of the pandemic, the governor called on California's roughly 40 million residents [to stay at home and only go out for essential needs](#), such as food or medical care. Businesses considered "essential," such as restaurants, grocery stores, gas stations, banks and healthcare can continue

Dr. Cameron Kaiser, Riverside County's public health officer, had previously barred gatherings of 10 or more and [closed all schools through April 30](#).

Some Inland residents are confused over which businesses have to close and who can stay open.

For some, it depends on whether the employer deems their business essential or not, said Jeremy Smith, an acting San Bernardino County spokesman.

"There haven't been very black-and-white answers on some of those," Smith said. There also has been no direction on how the county should enforce the order, he said.

[On Tuesday](#), San Bernardino County ordered the closure of movie theaters, gyms, health clubs, adult entertainment venues, bars and businesses that sell alcohol but not food until at least April 6. The county's restaurants must close their dining rooms and remain open only for delivery or take out. The order also requires gatherings of any size to be canceled, with some exceptions.

Businesses that have continued to operate despite the county's order are being reported to the county by other businesses, Smith said.

Unsure about closing? County officials strongly encourage you do.

"That way it doesn't reflect poorly on the business if there is some kind of an outbreak there," Smith said.

In the city of Riverside, Police Chief Larry Gonzalez said residents don't have to worry about being questioned on the street or arrested.

"We want you to be able to get groceries, bring home a prepared meal from a restaurant or pick up your prescriptions, for example," he said in a news release. "We just want you to go home as soon as you do those things."



Jeff Horseman | Reporter

Jeff Horseman got into journalism because he liked to write and stunk at math. He grew up in Vermont and he honed his interviewing skills as a supermarket cashier by asking Bernie Sanders “Paper or plastic?” After graduating from Syracuse University in 1999, Jeff began his journalistic odyssey at The Watertown Daily Times in upstate New York, where he impressed then-U.S. Senate candidate Hillary Clinton so much she called him “John” at the end of an interview. From there, he went to Annapolis, Maryland, where he covered city, county and state government at The Capital newspaper before love and the quest for snowless winters took him in 2007 to Southern California, where he started out covering Temecula for The Press-Enterprise. Today, Jeff writes about Riverside County government and regional politics. Along the way, Jeff has covered wildfires, a tropical storm, 9/11 and the Dec. 2 terror attack in San Bernardino. If you have a question or story idea about politics or the inner workings of government, please let Jeff know. He’ll do his best to answer, even if it involves a little math.

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