

# Big Bear Grizzly

## Government agencies respond to COVID-19

### San Bernardino County reports third confirmed case on March 17

By Kathy Portie and Judi Bowers - Mar 18, 2020

As the Grizzly was going to press March 17, San Bernardino County officials released a new COVID-19 alert.

A third confirmed case has been reported involving a woman in her 50s. No further information was available on the patient and where she lives.

Because of that, the county's acting health officer, Erin Gustafson, has ordered the cancellation of gatherings of any number of people within the county through at least April 6.

The order also requires, starting Wednesday, March 18, the closing of all movie theaters, gyms, health clubs, bars, adult entertainment establishments and other businesses that serve alcohol but do not serve food. Food and beverage establishments must follow guidance issued by the California Department of Health on March 16.

The order does not apply to activities essential to the functioning of the state, including work, public transportation, airport travel, grocery stores, charitable food distribution, certified farmers markets and shopping at stores or mall. The order also does not apply to congregate living situations including dormitories and homeless encampments.

The order is county wide and also pertains to incorporated towns and cities including Big Bear Lake.

All San Bernardino County public schools have voluntarily closed as part of the effort.

“I understand this creates hardships for many families and businesses, but at the end of the day I believe we all understand that we are in this together, and that together, we will get through this,” said Curt Hagman, county Board of Supervisors chairman. “The county is taking every step we can to stay in front of this threat.”

Some county and local agencies have closed their doors to public access. Others are keeping their doors open for now. All have staff on hand to assist customers and residents with questions, concerns and payments.

The city of Big Bear Lake’s doors remain open at City Hall for now. Frank Rush, city manager, said customers are encouraged to make an appointment for any city business that cannot be handled via phone or online.

At this time, no city staff is working remotely, but the city’s IT department is working on creating remote connections if it becomes necessary, Rush said. Essential public service personnel such as those in the public works department can’t work from home, Extra measures to keep equipment sanitized are in place, Rush said.

Additionally, all city meetings have been canceled. This includes City Council and Planning Commission meetings.

San Bernardino County officials continued their effort to slow the spread of novel coronavirus March 16, announcing the temporary closure of several county-operated attractions. These county departments will offer services online and over the phone, closing public offices until at least April 3.

County officials moved quickly to respond to public health concerns even before the first COVID-19 case was reported in the county on March 15. The county has continued to update its response via the Office of Emergency Services. According to Dawn Rowe,

3rd District Supervisor, the OES is coordinating the county-wide response to the outbreak.

“As it relates to county operations, essential services like law enforcement, fire and public works will continue,” Rowe said.

The county’s second confirmed case of COVID-19 was reported March 16. The patient is a 54-year-old male with underlying health conditions who had come into contact with people who had recently traveled from Washington state. The first case was involved a 53-year-old female Kaiser Fontana patient who returned from London sometime in the past week.

“The health risk from COVID-19 to the general public in San Bernardino County remains low at this time, but everyone is strongly urged to engage in practices that reduce the risk of spread,” Gustafson said. “We are prepared, from a public health standpoint, and our residents, cities, businesses and other key communities have been informed about safe practices.”

San Bernardino County Fire Department closed its stations to the public effective March 17. All stations remain staffed and personnel are responding to all calls for service.

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Rowe said the county’s Department of Public Health added a page on its website with updated information on the county’s response to COVID-19. Residents can access the website at <http://wp.sbcounty.gov/dph/>

coronavirus/.

The county has established a hotline to answer questions and provide information about resources. The number is 909-387-3911, and is available from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday

through Friday. The hotline is not for medical calls. If you are feeling sick, contact your health care provider or 911. Call 211 with questions about social services.

“We continue to commend the community for its strength and resilience in the face of this challenge,” Hagman said. “Avoiding panic and heeding the advice of public health professionals is the path that will lead us through this crisis. As more testing is conducted and more results come in, we thoroughly expect to see an increase in the number of reported cases.”

In Big Bear City, the Community Services District plans to keep its doors open to the public for now, but encourages people to use the drop box to make payments.

According to CSD General Manager Mary Reeves, the CSD will accept cash payments, but will not make change to avoid potential spread.

Each department has pandemic preparation procedures to follow, Reeves said.

“After every interaction, we wash our hands and clean the area,” Reeves said. “We clean and disinfect the work areas. We’ve canceled nonessential work related travel and classes. And we’ve relaxed the use of sick time for family leave.”

Reeves said the trigger for the CSD to close the office to the public is if and when a COVID-19 case is reported in Big Bear Valley.

“We are also looking into holding our April meetings via teleconference,” Reeves said.

Mountain Transit’s meeting scheduled for March 23 has been canceled and will be rescheduled for a later date. The public hearing was to discuss service changes.

At this time there are no major route or service changes for Mountain Transit. Social distancing on buses is in place. There may be changes in the future to accommodate passenger needs.

The Big Bear Lake Department of Water and Power is limiting lobby access and suspending indoor water audits. The lobby will be closed for payment, but open for urgent questions until further notice.

Customers are encouraged to submit questions by phone at 909-866-5050 or email at

[DWPCustomerService@BBLDWP.com](mailto:DWPCustomerService@BBLDWP.com). There is a drop box on the south side of the building for payments.

Rush said there have been no orders issued by the state to shelter in place as is happening in Northern California, but admits it could get to that point. He and other leaders are watching what's taking place in other areas to learn and be ready.

Rush said he expects there will be a lot of great lessons learned from this when we come out on the other side.