

Some San Bernardino County businesses may reopen by end of this week

By Jené Estrada, Hi-Desert Star May 4, 2020 Updated May 6, 2020

SAN BERNARDINO — California Gov. Gavin Newsom announced in a press conference Monday that the state will be moving into stage two of the stay-at-home order; a move that will allow some businesses to reopen if the county deems that it is ready. San Bernardino County will discuss these plans at a special board of supervisors meeting Tuesday, May 5.

Low-risk businesses including clothing stores, florists, bookstores and sporting good stores may reopen for curbside pickup under the new state order. Business who are given approval to reopen will be given strict guidelines on sanitation and use of personal protective equipment.

The order also allows for some rural counties, who have not been hit as hard as counties like Los Angeles and San Francisco counties, to move further into reopening, possibly even reopening non-essential factories and offices whose workers cannot telecommute from home.

“This is a very positive sign and it’s happening only for one reason,” Newsom said. “The data says it can happen.”

Restaurants for dine-in service, hair and nail salons, gyms and shopping malls will remain closed.

This order will act as a suggestion for all of the counties, said Newsom. Counties will have to work with their own Public Health Department staff to decide if taking moves to

reopen will be beneficial or hurtful to their residents. If counties choose to proceed with the order and there is a sudden spike in deaths or serious cases in the county, then the order may be retracted, Newsom said.

“If conditions radically change we'll have to appropriately ratchet up, not just ratchet down our stay-at-home order,” he said.

San Bernardino County opened county parks and lakes and allowed private golf courses to open on April 25. After the first weekend, chairman of the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors Curt Hagman said the initial opening was successful and residents participated safely.

“We saw our residents do a good job,” he said. “They kept social distance and kept their masks on so we kept people safe.”

He urged everyone to continue to use all of these precautions so that the county can open more businesses sooner rather than later.

Director of the Public Health Department, Trudy Raymundo, said the county decided to allow the openings because, while cases continue to increase, the average number of new cases per day is remaining flat.

“What I want to make clear is as we are increasing testing we know we’re going to see an increase in positive testing. That is to be expected,” she said. “Thankfully what we have started to see with all our efforts is that line (of average cases per day) has come down dramatically over the last 30 days.”

Dr. Rodney Borger with the Arrowhead Regional Medical Center added that the number of severe cases is also remaining extremely flat. He reiterated that the county has supplies and ventilators to treat more patients if the need arises.

Borger also announced that the county is starting serology testing for COVID-19. Serology testing looks for the presence of antibodies that the body creates when responding to a virus, in this case the new coronavirus.

Borger said serology testing began this week at Arrowhead Regional Medical Center and will soon expand to the rest of the county. The results will be used primarily to get a clear picture of the amount of county residents who have been exposed to the virus. A positive serology test, however, will not change how a resident should act during the stay-at-home order

“Just because you have a positive antibody test that does not mean you are immune or can't get it again,” he said. “That’s still unclear; we don't know that yet. This will give us a very good snapshot on how many people have been exposed in the community.”

With these new statistics the county is hopeful that businesses will be able to open soon. They will discuss their next steps at a special meeting at 10 a.m. Tuesday, May 5. The meeting can be viewed at <https://sanbernardino.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>.