NEWS

News Headlines 03/26/2020

➢ COUNTY SUPERVISORS HOLD A COVID-19 PRESS CONFERENCE
➢ San Bernardino County's pilot drive-thru coronavirus testing site to open Friday
➢ Highland declares local emergency

COUNTY SUPERVISORS HOLD A COVID-19 PRESS CONFERENCE

Staff Writer, Z107.7 FM News
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County Supervisors, and heads of about a dozen county departments on the front lines in dealing with the COVID -19 crisis yesterday morning held a press conference on county government's efforts to respond to the expanding public health emergency. Reporter Mike Lipsitz files this report…

The primary message from yesterday's press conference was for the pubic to do the right thing. Board Chair Curt Hagman urged that everyone protect themselves and keep from spreading the virus to your friends, coworkers and loved ones. Stay home, observe social distancing, and isolate yourself if you suspect you may be infected.

County Public Health Director Trudy Raymundo, reported 38 confirmed cases of novel Coronavirus and one death. She emphasized that the core mission of her department is to protect the two million residents. Testing remains a top priority because, she said, "we know that we do not understand the extent or the magnitude of this disease right now in our county simply because our test capacity has been limited." A pilot appointment only, drive-through test event will be held tomorrow. The when and where will be announced on the county's COVID-19 website wp.sbcounty.gov/dph/coronavirus. Because of the limited number of tests (about 400), only those who meet certain criteria will be given an appointment. Those criteria and an application for the test may be found at the county's Covid-19 website as well. Tests are taking five to seven days for results to come back except in critical circumstances where immediate results are called for. More test sites will be established throughout the county. The county has established a COVID-19 public hotline at 909-387-3911 for general, non-medial information and online at https//BIT.LY/SANCOVID.

Board Chair Curt Hagman said county hospitals are prepared. County is not sharing locations of those who have contracted the virus. There are plenty of supplies; don't hoard, allow supply chains to catch up. County services are all operating. Do your part, heed the orders to stay home and observe recommended practices. Test kits are in short supply. The county has administered just 460 tests thus far.

Concerning short term vacation rentals, County Public Health Director Trudy Raymundo said the order prohibiting such rentals is being amended for clarity. She emphasized that the governor's order is to stay home. that means your home and not someone else's home. That is part of an effort to flatten the curve of new infections by practicing social distancing.

Dr. Webster Wong, Chief of Medical Staff at Arrowhead Regional Medical Center, said, "We are preparing for the unexpected and to respond to any surge of sick patients." As for medical advice to prevent the spread of this virus, Dr. Wong advised everyone to:

•   Wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and warm water.

•   If you can't wash your hands, use hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol.

•   Use social distancing of at least six feet because the virus is easily spread; it can survive in the air or on surfaces for long periods of time.

•   Do not touch your face especially with unclean hands.

•   Cough or sneeze into a tissue or your elbow.

•   If you have cough, fever, or have been exposed to someone with the virus but do not have breathing problems, stay at home in isolation, rest, hydrate, control your fever with medication.

•   If you have these symptoms and have an underlying medical condition such as diabetes, COPD, heart disease, unstable asthma or are immunocompromised, please call Arrowhead Regional Medical Center or the County Health Department to be screened. I

•   And if you have any of the above conditions, and have breathing problems, go to the emergency room,

Dr. Rodney Borger, Chair of Emergency Medicine at Arrowhead Regional Medical Center, said his department regularly prepares for disasters including global pandemics. He reassured the public that there is a strong plan and that "together we will get through this." They are preparing to rapidly increase hospital capacity with a goal of 30 to 50 percent. A high-level viral containment unit has been established. A number of things are in short supply, masks, gowns, gloves, and tests are in limited supply. By mid-April, ARMC aims to have sufficient quantities of tests and same day results.

County Fire Chief Dan Munsey said the outbreak is much like a fire. His department is working closely with other departments. Calls to 911 are segregated with suspected COVID-19 cases handled separately. All fire personnel are closely monitored several times a day. Responders have the equipment needed, although much of it is in short supply. When you call 911, suspected cases are asked to wait outside the building for protection of first responders. Fire departments throughout the district are working together.

Supervisor Jose Gonzales addressed Spanish speakers advising everyone to observe recommended practices such as social distancing, hand washing and other strategies to slow the spread of the virus.

Ted Alejandre, County Superintendent of Schools representing 33 school districts and over 400,000 students, 19,000 teachers and other administrators and employees, said all schools are closed until May 1, but the county continues efforts to see that students continue to learn as well as receive nutritional support. The schools are attempting to leverage best practices for continued learning.

Daniel Munoz, County Director of the Office of Emergency Services, plays a critical-behind-the scenes support for the agencies involved in the crisis. OES helps coordinate all the first responders and others involved.

County Sheriff John McMahon reported procedures at county jails have changed in response to the outbreak. New detainees are tested and isolated if showing any signs of the virus. Bookings are down approximately 18 percent since the crisis began presumably because of fewer people on the streets and other reasons. The sheriff's department continues to maintain public safety.

http://z1077fm.com/county-supervisors-hold-a-covid-19-press-conference/

San Bernardino County's pilot drive-thru coronavirus testing site to open Friday

Sandra Emerson, San Bernardino Sun News
Posted: March 25, 2020, 11:25 a.m.

A San Bernardino County employee, who asked not to be identified, sprays disinfectant on a microphone as **San Bernardino County Emergency Services** Manager Daniel Munoz waits to speak during a press conference to update the public on the current coronavirus conditions in the county Wednesday morning, March 25, 2020, at the County Government Center in downtown San Bernardino. (Photo by Will Lester, Inland Valley Daily Bulletin/SCNG)

San Bernardino County will roll out a pilot drive-thru novel coronavirus testing site Friday, March 27, county officials announced Wednesday, March 25.

The announcement came before the county confirmed its second death from COVID-19, a 46-year-old man with underlying health conditions, officials said. There are now 54 confirmed cases in the county.

Details about the testing site, which will be by-appointment only, will be posted to the county's website at 8 a.m. Thursday, Trudy Raymundo, county public health director said during a news conference.

"We do want to use this as a pilot and then be able to scale it out to all the other areas of our county, be it the High Desert, the Morongo Basin, the west end, the mountains and things like that," Raymundo said. "Please patient with us. Our intent is to ultimately roll this out countywide."

The county reported its first death Tuesday, March 24. A 50-year-old man with underlying health conditions was the first person to die of the virus, county officials said. At that time, the county had 38 confirmed cases of COVID-19.

"That death came far too soon, knowing we only had our first case a week ago," Raymundo said. "For all of public health, our hearts go out to that family."

Raymundo was joined by county supervisors, Sheriff John McMahon, **Fire** Chief Dan Munsey, County Superintendent of Schools Ted Alejandre, physicians from Arrowhead Regional Medical Center and other county officials for the news conference, the county's first since the pandemic began.

The county is launching a dashboard on its website Thursday at 8 a.m. with information on confirmed cases, test counts, links to data in other counties and other information on the outbreak. The county will update the number of confirmed cases on its website at 5 p.m. daily.

Testing is the county's biggest priority right now, Raymundo said. More than 400 tests have been done in the county. Testing is up 20,000% since the first case was reported Sunday, March 15, she said. That may be why the numbers were initially low, she said.

"We know we do not understand the extent or the magnitude of this disease in this county, simply because our testing capacity has been limited," she said.

Public health officials have not been releasing the age, gender or residence of those who have tested positive to protect their privacy. They also worry about stigmatizing certain communities or residents and offering residents false hope that they are safe if there are no confirmed cases in their city, officials said.

"With the number of cases we've seen since the very beginning, it's obvious we have coronavirus, or COVID-19, in the entire county," Raymundo said. "What I ask is that rather than trying to divide this disease up by city, I need residents to assume it's already in your city and that it's already in your community."

Confirmed cases include Big Bear Lake Mayor Rick Herrick, an employee at Dominguez Elementary School in San Bernardino and a San Bernardino County sheriff's deputy.

"I know we're in challenging and unprecedented times," McMahon said. "I want to make sure public safety remains our No.1 priority."

The deputy diagnosed with COVID-19 is at home, recovering and no longer showing symptoms, McMahon said. The department has made changes to protect employees and changed procedures at jail facilities, he said.

The county's overall jail population has dropped by 700 in the past two weeks, from 6,200 to 5,500, McMahon said. The number of arrests and bookings have dropped by about 17 to 18%, he said. This could be for a few reasons, McMahon said, including that more people are staying home and committing fewer crimes.

Fire personnel are wearing nontraditional protective gear, including gloves, a gown and a mask, respirator or goggles, Munsey said. This does not mean that residents with whom they deal have COVID-19, he said, but the move aims to protect personnel.

Arrowhead Regional Medical Center in Colton is preparing to increase hospital beds by 30% to 50%, said Dr. Rodney Borger, chairman of emergency medicine at the county-run hospital.

The hospital has set up portable tents and trailers outside to treat suspected COVID-19 patients, to keep them from going into the hospital and exposing staff or at-risk ill patients.

Arrowhead converted a hospital unit into a high-level viral containment unit for the highest risk COVID-19 patients and is preparing a local surgery center to accept medical surgical patients to increase hospital capacity, Borger said.

Officials are also working to increase ventilator capacity and to conserve supplies to stay ahead of the shortages, he said.

By early April, the hospital expects to be able to do high-volume, same-day, COVID-19 testing, Borger said.

Efforts to help those with mental-health needs and the homeless also are underway, he said.

"It's been said multiple times, it's better to prepare and not need, than to not prepare and not have," he said.

In neighboring Riverside County, an employee at an Amazon fulfillment center in Moreno Valley has tested positive for the virus, the company confirmed.

https://www.sbsun.com/2020/03/25/san-bernardino-countys-pilot-drive-thru-coronavirus-testing-site-to-open-friday/

Highland declares local emergency

Hector Hernandez Jr., Highland Community News
Posted: March 25, 2020

On Tuesday, March 24, the Highland City Council passed a resolution declaring a local emergency concerning COVID-19, during a special meeting attended by the council members by teleconference.

The council approved the proclamation of a local emergency with a 4-0-1 vote. Mayor Larry McCallon, Mayor Pro Tem Penny Lilburn and Councilmen Jesse Chavez and John Timmer attended the 5-minute meeting and voted by teleconference. Councilwoman Anaeli Solano was absent.

The proclamation activates the city's emergency plan and organizational structure and authorizes City Manager Joseph Hughes, as the city's director of emergency services, and the city's disaster council to prepare for and respond to the coronavirus pandemic.

The disaster council is made up of Hughes, Mayor Larry McCallon, Police Chief Jon Billings, Fire Capt. Josh Janssen and Assistant Director of Emergency Services Chuck Dantuono.

The resolution directs Hughes and the disaster council "to take any necessary steps for the protection of life, health and safety in the city of Highland."

It also orders each of the city departments to review and revise their emergency and contingency plans as needed to address the risk posed by COVID-19 and to coordinate with **San Bernardino County Office of Emergency Services (OES).**

The city departments are also ordered to track costs of staffing, supplies and equipment related to COVID-19 preparation and prevention, which is also to be communicated to OES.

The city's director of emergency services and disaster council will also be coordinating with OES and the San Bernardino County Department of Public Health for its citywide response to the pandemic.

These orders will be in effect until the state of local emergency is terminated by a proclamation of the Highland City Council.

https://www.highlandnews.net/news/public_safety/highland-declares-local-emergency/article_ab3bd9a8-6ebe-11ea-b140-6b5147ba1104.html