

ORANGE COUNTY, VIRGINIA

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A Message to Our Citizens:

Given the evolving situation with the new coronavirus COVID-19, Orange County is taking a variety of actions to contribute to the worldwide efforts to slow down the spread of this virus. You have heard media references to efforts to “flatten the curve”. I am posting a graphic with this letter which shows how these efforts are aimed at reducing the number of sick individuals at any given time so that we do not exceed the capacity of our health care facilities and institutions (including medical offices, EMS providers, and hospitals) to provide proper care to patients.

As of this date, there have been no reported cases of COVID-19 in Orange County. However, on March 16, the County declared a local state of emergency. This action is necessary to allow us access to federal and state disaster funds and other resources should they be needed to support the County's efforts to deal with the COVID-19.

The most important thing to keep in mind is that if each of us makes every effort to follow guidance issued by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Virginia Department of Health, and federal and state officials, we have the best chance of doing our part to protect our own health, as well as the health of our loved ones and members of our community, especially those in vulnerable population groups.

I want to emphasize that the best resource for information on COVID-19, the state of the spread of the virus in Virginia, recommended precautions, and other details are CDC and Virginia Department of Health websites. There is a considerable amount of incorrect information on social media sites and in the rumor mill. The recommended website from our region's Virginia Department of Health Medical Director is: www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus . A map is posted on this website and updated daily by the Virginia Health Department which shows how many confirmed cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed, by locality, which you may find informative.

Importantly, the County is NOT reducing operations in critical and essential areas of Public Safety, including the Sheriff's Office, Fire and EMS, E911, and Social Services operations. In fact, if needed, we have emergency measures in place to support additional staff as needed in those areas. We respectfully request that citizens follow recommended protective protocols when interacting with all County employees to help ensure that we can keep these operations fully staffed.

The Orange County Board of Supervisors is in full support of efforts being taken to protect citizens and staff. Toward that effort, given that there were no time-sensitive items scheduled for its March 24, 2020 Board of Supervisors Meeting, all members of the Board supported the recommendation to cancel that meeting. Information regarding any cancelations will be noticed and posted on the County's website.

I have created a COVID-19 Response Team which allows me to consult with key individuals on County staff as we take appropriate actions in response to what is likely to be a rapidly moving

and changing situation once Orange County has individuals who may be quarantined, awaiting test results, and or actively ill resulting from exposure to COVID-19.

Included in the County's efforts to get ahead of the curve and suppress the spread of COVID-19, we have postponed or canceled many community programs, classes, events, and reservations at County facilities until further notice. For those directly affected by these decisions, county departments will communicate to participants with cancellation or rescheduling details. Additionally, the Visitors Center located in the Town of Orange is not staffed starting March 17, 2020. Orange County childcare programs have been suspended and our libraries are closed. Information will be available on the County's website www.orangecountyva.gov or on the County's Facebook pages as these changes and decisions are made.

Starting March 18, 2020, with the assistance of our excellent County staff, I have implemented a variety of actions which are aimed at continuing to provide essential services to citizens while reducing chances of transmitting COVID-19 when it reaches Orange County. Modified operations include telework options for employees, adjusted employee office hours, social distancing protocols, enhanced notices of proper health practices, reduced hours of operations and access to the public in certain offices, and the postponement or alteration of all non-essential meetings. We will be conducting staff meetings and meetings requested by citizens by electronic means. When this is not possible, we are observing Governor Northam's request that group meetings be kept to no more than ten participants. These decisions are to ensure the safety and well-being of our visitors and staff, which is our highest priority. I have implemented emergency personnel policies which are aimed at ensuring that County employees do not come to work if they expect that that are sick or if they have been exposed to COVID-19. These measures protect both citizens doing business in County facilities as well as their coworkers.

During modified operations, residents and visitors will still be able to access county services; however, we stress the following:

- Take advantage of our online services by visiting www.orangecountyva.gov .
- Determine if your service or request is essential or whether it can be postponed.
- Conduct any business with the County by telephone, email, or through our website if at all possible. If you need to conduct business in person with staff, please call ahead of time to check the hours of operation for that department and to make an appointment with appropriate staff. If you do need to come to County facilities, please observe and respect requested safety precautions, especially hand washing and social distances of at least six feet. Extra efforts to clean surface areas in county buildings with disinfectant as well as making hand sanitizer available (to the extent that we can maintain supplies) throughout our buildings have been implemented.
- **If you are sick, especially if you are showing signs and symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, etc.), please do not come to any County facility.**
- Continue to exercise proper handwashing with soap and other preventative actions such as covering coughs with a tissue, sneezing into elbow, avoiding touching eyes, nose, mouth, and practicing social distancing. Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces at home.
- For accurate information and the latest developments on COVID-19, visit:
 - www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus
 - www.cdc.gov

It is important that we come together as a community to take the necessary precautions to assist in controlling the spread of COVID-19. Orange County is working faithfully with the Rappahannock-Rapidan Health District and with state and federal agencies to keep our community informed on the COVID-19 situation. Orange County will continue to assess the situation daily and will notify the public if there are any changes to these procedures.

Please stay informed by checking the county's website at www.orangecountyva.gov , and signing up for Orange County Alerts from the county homepage.

Respectfully yours,
Brenda G. Garton
Interim Orange County Administrator

Goal of Non-pharmaceutical Interventions

“Flatten the curve”

