

ORANGE COUNTY, VIRGINIA

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A Message to Our Citizens:

Given the evolving situation with the new coronavirus COVID-19, Orange County continues to take 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 posted a graphic with my March 20, 2020 Message to Citizens 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 and safe care to patients.

As of the date of this message, the Rappahannock-Rapidan Health Department has announced the first positive case of COVID-19 in Orange County. Obviously, this confirmed case makes COVID-19 more real for us and will raise the level of concern in our community. This announcement makes it even more important that we all follow the protective guidelines to keep ourselves and our loved ones as safe as possible.

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.

Again, 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 Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Virginia Department of Health (VDH) 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 which you may find informative. The map, which is updated daily at noon, shows the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 by locality. We have also just added a page to the County’s website specific to COVID-19 where you can find local information as well as links to helpful websites to learn the facts: <https://orangecountyva.gov/863/COVID-19> .

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. At a Special Meeting of The Orange County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday, March 24, the Board passed an emergency ordinance allowing meetings of the Board of Supervisors,

the Planning Commission, and other County boards, commissions, authorities, or public bodies to be conducted electronically. This action ensures the continuity of operations for Orange County during this pandemic while continuing to observe social distancing guidelines. More guidance on how meetings will be handled will be included as each meeting is announced.

Since my last message on March 18, in response to escalating cases in Virginia, most County offices and facilities were closed to the public effective March 23, 2020. 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 make an appointment with appropriate staff.
- Please observe and respect requested safety precautions, especially hand washing and social distances of at least six feet, if you do need to visit a county office. Extra measures to clean surface areas in county buildings with disinfectant and to make hand sanitizer available (to the extent that we can maintain supplies) throughout our buildings have been implemented.
- Call in advance if you need to deliver documents. You may be asked to leave documents outside that office door.
- **Please do not come to any County facility if you are sick, especially if you are showing signs and symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, etc.), have been asked to self-quarantine, or have been exposed to an individual who has COVID-19. Seek advice and care from your health care provider.**
- Continue to follow protective protocols:
 - Stay home as much as possible.
 - Exercise proper handwashing with soap and hot water, for at least 20 seconds.
 - Use hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol) if handwashing is not available.
 - Sneeze or cough into your elbow or cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue.
 - Avoid touching your face, especially eyes, nose, and mouth, with unwashed hands.
 - Practice social distancing of at least 6 feet.
 - Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces at home.
 - Be cautious of surfaces in heavily trafficked areas, such as the touch pad on the credit card machine, door handles, public bathroom faucets, and gas pump handles. Protect your hands from contact with those surfaces if possible and disinfect with hand sanitizer following such contact.
 - Be respectful of precautions in place in areas throughout the community where you must go to obtain necessary goods and services.
 - More details on these and other protective measures can be found:
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/prevention.html>
- For accurate information and the latest developments on COVID-19, visit:
 - www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus
 - www.cdc.gov
 - <https://orangecountyva.gov/863/COVID-19>

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.

Remember that all of us are a little scared and nervous about this virus. We need to be respectful and responsible and work together to get past this pandemic. Respect and kindness go a long way to remind each other that we are all in this together. Let's all make an extra effort to thank

all of the health care workers who are handling this emergency. These individuals are at the greatest risk of contracting the virus while they care for our loved ones. And, let's not forget to thank those folks still required to work in essential services areas, such as public safety workers, truck drivers, child care workers, and staff at the local pharmacy and grocery store – all of whom are just as scared as we are. They need our respect, support, and appreciation.

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