



City of Arts & Innovation

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City of Riverside, Citing COVID-19 Surge, Reduces In-Person Services

Some employees will continue to work in City facilities, which will be closed to the public

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – The City of Riverside, citing record daily increases in COVID-19 cases and shrinking availability of intensive care unit beds, will close a few City facilities to the public at the close of business today, July 10, to protect the health of the employees and the community we serve.

The decision by City Manager Al Zelinka, who serves as the City’s Emergency Services Director during a local emergency, came after the city and the surrounding Riverside County saw consecutive days of record highs in day-over-day increases in COVID-19 cases.

Riverside County, which is now facing more than 23,000 cases of COVID-19, saw record day-over-day increases on both Wednesday (856) and Thursday (1,377). Record day-over-day numbers also were recorded within the city limits of Riverside, with 119 on Wednesday and 183 on Thursday.

“The community spread of COVID-19 is becoming more concerning by the day, and I am responsible for the well-being of City employees and members of the public who visit City facilities for services,” Zelinka said. “We made great progress as a community in controlling the spread of the virus in the early weeks of the pandemic. Now that the number of diagnosed cases and the positivity rate are increasing very quickly in July, the City Team must continue to do its part to reduce further transmission of coronavirus.”

The City of Riverside recorded 504 cases of COVID-19 through July 8. At that rate, Riverside would see 3,250 cases in July, which would be more than triple the previous high for a month -- 1,184 in June. (July already has nearly half as many cases in eight days as were recorded in all 30 days of June).

The positivity rate of COVID-19 testing in Riverside County also is very concerning. That is the percentage of people who test positive for the virus of the total number of people tested. It is an important method of indicating the severity of local infection because it does not depend on the number of people being tested.

The positivity rate in Riverside County has been nearly 16 percent in the last four days, which is about triple the positivity rate for California as a whole. That four-day spike will inevitably drive up the countywide 14-day average positivity rate above the current rate of just under 12 percent, which is considered “moderate” to “severe” under the City Pandemic Preparedness Plan metric.

That 12 percent positivity rate during the past two weeks is 50 percent higher than the 8 percent rate that Riverside County attested to in its communications with the State of California, which allowed the county to begin reopening the local economy in May. An increase in the 14-day average driven by the spike in the past four days would push Riverside County even farther from its target of 8 percent.

The increase in COVID-19 cases already is affecting the availability of beds in the intensive care units (ICU) of hospitals in the city. This is important not just for people who may contract COVID-19, but also for anyone who might need an ICU bed as a result of a car accident or other trauma.

Local Riverside hospitals have enacted surge plans due to being close to or over licensed capacity.

“This hospitalization and ICU data is concerning to many in our city,” Zelinka said. “However, Riverside has an excellent medical system and community members should continue to feel confident to receive services from their providers and hospitals.”

Zelinka noted that the City has benefitted greatly from the work that has gone into controlling the spread of COVID-19 since mid-March. Riverside has moved many of its functions online while formulating thoughtful approaches to returning employees back to work and for how the city should respond if there is a second wave of COVID-19 in the fall.

Some services cannot be moved online. For example, the City Clerk’s passport service will remain closed until further notice. It had planned to open July 15 on an appointment basis, but that cannot continue because it would require in-person interaction.

The City encourage residents to continue with steps to limit the spread of COVID-19, including wearing a face covering when outside your home, washing your hands frequently, maintaining six feet of physical distancing and refraining from touching your face whenever possible.

For COVID-19 data for the City of Riverside and County of Riverside, please visit:
<https://www.rivcoph.org/coronavirus>

For the latest information and resources regarding COVID-19 -- www.RiversideCA.gov/COVID-19