

COVID-19 Update Press Conference

Friday, May 22, 2020

Kevin Captain – Interim Director of Community Information of Volusia County

Dr. Randa Matusiak – Special Projects Coordinator, Volusia County Public Protection

Ray Manchester – Director, Volusia County Beach Safety

Kevin Captain – Interim Director of Community Information of Volusia County

Good afternoon. I'm Kevin Captain, interim director of community information for Volusia County Government. Happy Friday, we're just a few hours from the start of the Memorial Day Weekend. Just a few items that we are going to run by before bringing up our speakers today. We have a brief conference today and our speakers are:

- Randa Matusiak, who is a Special Projects Coordinator for Volusia County's Department of Public Protection.
- And, we have Beach Safety Director, Ray Manchester, who will highlight items about the beach this weekend, because we know that it's going to be a very busy beach weekend.

So, just as a reminder, the burn ban is still in effect for Volusia County. That includes the unincorporated areas of Volusia County, Town of Pierson, City of Lake Helen and the City of Oak Hill.

Now, for a quick update on the vacation rentals. The Volusia County Council approved a proposal plan and it has been sent to the Department of Business and Professional Regulations. It was sent on Tuesday. We are waiting for approval, and judging from looking at the other county's that have been approved, this looks like it will be a fairly quick process. As soon as we know, you will know. Cities can opt out of the proposal, so vacation rental owners should check with their city before reopening.

And, finally today we hosted a panel discussion this morning on emergency medical care in the age of COVID-19. Particularly for those who have a fear of going to Emergency Department and the importance of seeking care when needed. That is mostly what we addressed, and if you are interested in watching it, just check out the Volusia County Emergency Management Facebook page. With that we will bring up, Dr. Randa Matusiak.

Randa Matusiak – Special Projects Manager, Volusia County Public Protection

Thank you, Kevin. As businesses continue to reopen, Volusia County continues to monitor new cases per day. As of the update from yesterday, with the Florida Department of Health website, there were ten cases added to Volusia County. So, four of those cases were confirmed yesterday, May 21st, one additional case was confirmed on May 20th, and then five new cases were confirmed as of the update from this morning, May 22nd. So, this brings Volusia County to 640 cases total, with 36 deaths.

Approximately 64% of those deaths are from residents from long-term care facilities.

As far as testing is concerned, we have done 18,568 tests, which represents a 3.4% positivity rate. So, that does represent a decline in the rate of positive cases overall. And, we do continue to look at that trend of new cases each day, and overall we are seeing a decline. Though, in the recent days, the last couple of days really, we have seen a slight incline. And, we do keep an eye on this, but there has been really approximately seven new cases per day for the last 14 days. So, again we pay close attention to those cases each day, particularly as it relates to hospital capacity, which has been and continues to be sufficient to meet the needs of any kind of new COVID cases that we see.

So, with that I will hand it over to Beach Safety Director, Ray Manchester.

Ray Manchester – Director, Volusia County Beach Safety

Thank you, Randa, good afternoon. With the Memorial Day weekend almost upon us, we are already seeing a lot of people enjoying the beach. Expect this weekend to be even busier. We have a big beach, we have 47 miles of beach, which means there's plenty of room for people to follow our social distancing guidelines, which consists of groups of 6 or less, and those groups staying at least 10 feet from everybody else.

All of the in-season vehicular beach access ramps are open to vehicles for beach parking. Vehicles must park directly in front of a blue post or conservation post, which are placed at 25 foot intervals.

If you're planning to park on the beach, consider using a less trafficked approach:

- Milsap Road and Harvard Drive in Ormond Beach
- Williams Avenue and Hartford Avenue in Daytona Beach

- And Botefuhr Avenue, Minerva Road, Florida Shores Boulevard, Van Avenue and El Portal Street in Daytona Beach Shores.

A full list of vehicle access ramps is available at Volusia dot org forward slash beach driving. We will have morning high tides all weekend, which means some vehicle access ramps may be delayed in opening. You might want to consider using off-beach parking lots, all of which are now 100% open.

Also, the surf is pretty rough right now. We are flying red flags right now and yesterday we rescued 84 people. The Beach Safety division is ready and lifeguard towers are fully staffed. There is no excuse not to swim in front of a staffed lifeguard tower. It may sound logical, but I'm going to say it again— swim in front of a staffed lifeguard tower!

Even if you are a great swimmer and have good water skills you may get in a situation where you need help. Help our lifeguards do their jobs by swimming where you can get help if needed.

For beach updates, follow Volusia Beaches on Facebook and Twitter. And, if you haven't already, download the Volusia Beaches app, which is free on the Google Play and App store. The best resource for real-time updates on vehicle access ramps and staffed lifeguard towers, as well as info on off-beach parking, weather conditions and more.

And with that, I'll hand it back over to Kevin.

Kevin Captain – Interim Director of Community Information of Volusia County

Thank you Mr. Manchester and Dr. Matusiak.

Just a reminder that we will not have a briefing planned for Monday, but there is a special meeting of the Volusia County Council next Tuesday morning, May 26 at 10 a.m. That particular special meeting will focus on a \$2.5 million COVID-19 grant program to assist non-profit agencies in Volusia County.

And before we go, it's important to remember the reason for our upcoming three day weekend. Memorial Day is a day to honor the men and women who died serving in the United States military in protecting the freedom of this great country. Please take a few moments this weekend to honor and remember all those who have lost their lives serving for the United States of America.

And with that, we will close today's briefing. Take care, have a safe weekend, and we will see you next week.

- Take care and stay safe.