

## COVID-19 Update Press Conference

Friday, July 17, 2020

**Kevin Captain** – Director of Community Information of Volusia County

**Ed Kelley** - Chair, Volusia County Council

**Jim Judge** – Director, Emergency Management of Volusia County

**Patricia Boswell** – Administrator, Florida Department of Health in Volusia County

**Kevin Captain** – Director of Community Information of Volusia County

Good afternoon, I'm Kevin Captain, Director of Community Information for Volusia County Government. Thank you for joining us today for today's COVID-19 briefing. Today, you'll hear from Volusia County Chair, Ed Kelley; Jim Judge, Director of Emergency Management, and Patricia Boswell, the administrator for the Florida Department of Health in Volusia County.

In just a few minutes Mr. Kelley is going to talk to you about the various assistance programs that are available to help residents and businesses that have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. But first, a note from Florida Power and Light. If you are a customer struggling to pay your bill because of COVID-19, resources may be available. You may qualify for state, local and or Federal assistance, which has increased significantly as a result of the pandemic. And, FPL has a process that they can walk you through. We ask that you call them directly at 800-226-3545. I'll repeat that number for FPL, again, that's (800) 226-3545.

And, a brief note on testing locations. We continue to update information on the Volusia County testing locations on our website: [Volusia.org/testing](http://Volusia.org/testing) will take you right there. And, if you don't readily have internet access, or would rather hear about testing locations, you can call (866) 345-0345. And, that is a pre-recorded message that gives you all the information about testing locations in Volusia County. With that we will bring up Volusia County Chair, Ed Kelley.

**Ed Kelley** - Chair, Volusia County Council

Thank you Kevin. And, as we move forward in the third week, as it is, of our campaign. Before we get into that, let me cover one point real quickly. Two weeks ago I begged, pleaded, asked, tried to cajole, try to get you all to follow a guideline which I had hoped that everyone would follow. It was, just for thirty days, just thirty days, everyone, mask up, and we could bring this thing to its knees. Now I see that the CDC Director for Protection, Robert Redfield, is following my lead. Saying the exact same things two weeks later. I'm glad to see that the CDC is on board with what I know, and what we know needs to be done. Now, that's kind of cool to know that they are following that.

We are now in our third week of campaign: Back Up. Mask Up. Step Up. Wash Up. Now, I don't always get those things in the right order, and it doesn't really matter which order that you put them in. What you have to remember is the first thing that you need to do is "step back" from people. If you are six to ten feet away from someone, that reduces your chances of having anything happen exponentially. Also, when you are in crowded areas and you can't social distance, "mask up." It is just that simple put your mask on and don't be afraid to wear it.

Next, "wash up." When you are out shopping and you touch something that you are not familiar with touching, or don't touch all of the time, wash your hands before you touch your face. I know that I stressed that last time, but what we are seeing is support to various degrees. We are also seeing that retail stores are stepping up following the "mask up." And, they are going to require that, and I think that will go a long way in you knowing that they are asking you when you are going to these retail stores, put your mask on for everyone's benefit.

This is not a government mandate. This is a request for you to take some personal responsibility and put a mask on. A simple little thing like that will make a difference. And, I do think that campaign is, as I said, is having an impact on people wearing it. Remember, my mask protects you, and your mask can protect me.

Now, before I say this, or someone else says it, maybe Patricia Boswell, or someone, we have seen reporting mistakes. We know that they have been made. Ridiculous mistakes. Things have been put out there that are mistakes. What doesn't change is the underlying fact that we are having hospitalizations, people are getting sick, and people are dying from it. So, the reality of it is; it's happening. So, whether the numbers are off a little or a lot, it is real. So, I want everyone to be aware of that and do your part.

The county still has funds available for the small businesses. And, do you realize that we have so far sent checks, 1,800 checks, totaling \$5.6 million. I've received emails and letters from three or four or five or

six, seven, eight, nine, ten. Let me read to you a little headline of a small business in New Smyrna Beach. "As a small business owner of 32 years, in New Smyrna Beach, my store has never been closed or affected negatively like this. While closed, I used my savings to pay my expenses and help my employees. This grant came to me in time to help me keep my doors open and put my employees back to work." And, that is from, Nejma Peter.

We have another individual, also from New Smyrna Beach, from Port Orange actually, and he said that during the month of March he had zero income, and the money that he received helped them to continue to stay open to a degree, and keep their employees there. Business was zero, and then in April business was down 12%, and then in March, I mean in May, they are now running 15% above last year, all because they were able to have their employees still there, on the payroll, ready to go.

And, another one, from Dennis Baker, Mr. Carpet in Volusia County. "Thank you so much for the grant you guys gave us, \$3,000, during the hard times and helping us to stay in business," and wanted to thank us personally. And, that was Dennis Baker.

And, that was just a few of the ones that we are getting. We have money available, don't think that if you haven't submitted the request it's too late; it's still there. So, grants are still available.

Also, very, very important, funds are still available to assist people with rent and mortgage. For mortgage, you have to, you realize that there are certain restrictions. So, if you are behind in your mortgage, you still can submit, and you will be eligible for up to \$1,500 per month, for three months to help you. The delay that we are having if some of you have submitted has come from the mortgage holders and not getting back to us, because that is the one thing that we have to do. We have to verify that you did have a mortgage.

We also have grant funds available to help the small home-based business and non-profit. You can find all the links to all of those programs on the Volusia County website. It is [Volusia.org](http://Volusia.org). And there you click on a link, or enter it in as a request, and you'll find it there. It's also worth mentioning that the County has extensively advertised the grant programs through print, radio, digital social media, and everyone, if you know someone: a small business, a friend, let them know that. And here is what we ask, take a moment to identify someone in need. There are tens of thousands of people who follow these briefings, so just by your word of mouth. I know that we are saying some of the same things, and don't keep saying that because I am trying to make a difference, and we are urging and trying to get you to help

make a difference. Any one person, one person making a difference can affect the lives of hundreds. So, do your part in helping do that. You can do that by letting people know that.

Also, and I didn't have this written down, so it just escaped me for just a second, but anyway, there is no reason, the county is giving out . . . we will have given out, or made available to you, almost 250,000 masks. So, there is no reason to say that you can't afford one, to use it, because they are out there. If you need a mask, call somebody; call the county; call me. If you can't get a mask, I'll tell you where to get one, or will have one delivered to you. If you need a mask when you go out to protect others from you, and the biggest thing on the mask, and I keep talking to Ms. Boswell about this, is that we have got to have anyone who has tested positive, to isolate or quarantine. And, if we are going to have any penalties, like some people are putting a penalty on some people for not wearing a mask, I would like to see a \$500 penalty or jail time for someone who has tested positive, who is out in the public, wearing a mask or not. That cannot exist. And, that is why our numbers are still ballooning as they were. I am hopeful that they will go down, but until we get the positive people who have tested, off of, out of our community, exposing all of us, they're not going to go down.

So, with that, here's more from Jim Judge, our Emergency Management Director, who has all of the answers to everything else.

**Jim Judge** – Director, Emergency Management of Volusia County

Thank you so much Chairman Kelley, I appreciate that greatly. Well, here is a little update from Emergency Management. You know, every week we are on a lot of conference calls. And, on one of the conference calls we had with the Florida Division of Emergency Management is that they had some meals "ready to eat" available. So, we thought, well, that is wonderful, let's put in a request; so we did. And, over a period of about a couple of weeks we received a 150 pallets of meals. There are 169 boxes per pallet, and each box contains five meals. So, as soon as the first delivery came in I opened one of the boxes and was quite frankly delighted. Campbell's chicken noodle soup, Muscleman's apple sauce. We had, oh, gosh, Bumble Bee chicken salad; lots of different things that were in those boxes. And, they were wonderful.

And, so with that many pallets of food coming in, we stored half over at the Ocean Center, our logistics center, and Patricia Boswell was kind enough to create some extra space over at the Health Department storage area. And, I am happy to report that the vast majority of those meals have been distributed

throughout Volusia County, to over 13 different organizations that do provide food services to the public, and to the needy. So, we're real pleased with that. That has gone extremely well. And, with that, our logistics center over at the Ocean Center, run by Mark Swanson, Deputy Public Protection Director with a lot of public protection staff, has done an incredible job over there, both not only receiving these items, but also then distributing them out. And, also with our Corrections Division, Dr. Mark Flowers, the Corrections Director, using interns and his staff to be able to deliver these supplies throughout Volusia County. So, like everything we do, it's a wonderful team effort. We are really pleased to provide you all with that information.

And, we did set a few of those pallets aside for hurricane season, because again, we are moving toward, slowly, toward the peak of that hurricane season. Once we get into the middle of August, as you all know it's supposed to be an above average year, so we certainly want to pay attention to that.

So, with that, Chairman Kelley did mention that we had additional good news. We did, as Chairman Kelley mentioned, we handed out a couple of weeks ago, 119,000 masks. We handed those out at over a dozen different locations. Everything from our libraries. Right now we have them at the De Leon Springs fire station. We have them at the Port Orange Regional Library, many libraries, the Shores Community Center, the Salvation Army. Oak Hill has been kind enough to work with us. Also, Holly Hill Police Department is handing them out. So, 119,000 were given away in the first round. 113,000 are also going out, but then we also worked with a number of additional locations to be able to make sure that the homeless folks in Volusia County also have access to those masks as well.

Again, I want to thank Patricia. I want to thank Mark Swanson, Mark Flowers, for all their hard work. We are grateful to the state of Florida for the delivery of all of these supplies that we were then able to in turn and put them out for public consumption and public use.

Again, just a reminder, hurricane season, you know, even the numbers from Colorado State have increased. We are moving into a La Niña situation which conditions then are going to be even worse, because the La Niña means that the upper level winds are blowing east to west, which you know, may bring those storms in towards the U.S. Certainly begin to keep an eye on the tropics, and if you haven't prepared for hurricane season yet, I encourage you to do that. And, as Chairman Kelley mentioned, I also want to urge you to wear a mask wherever you go. Protect yourself, protect your family, your friends, and protect me. And, I greatly appreciate that.

And, with that, let me turn it over to Patricia Boswell, the Department Director for the Volusia County Department of Health.

**Patricia Boswell** – Administrator, Florida Department of Health in Volusia County

Good afternoon, I am Patricia Boswell. I am the Administrator for the Florida Department of Health in Volusia County. Volusia now has a total of 4,768 cases, that is people with a positive COVID-19 test result. It took us 100 days to reach the first 1,000 cases on June 16<sup>th</sup>. Then, it took 12 days to reach the second 1,000 cases. Nine days to reach the third 1,000 cases and six days later, exceed 4,000 cases on June 13<sup>th</sup>. In the past three days we've had more than 600 cases reported in Volusia.

Please protect yourself when you leave your home and do the mitigation measures necessary to protect others. Volusia County's 14 day positivity rate is 11.75%. Volusia has had 79 deaths related to COVID-19. That is an increase of seven deaths since this time last week. Forty-nine of those deaths are related to long-term care facilities. As a result of the regular testing being conducted at our long-term care facilities, currently we have multiple facilities with more than five cases.

Our hospital systems continue to see an increase in admissions and emergency room visits related to COVID-19. The number of COVID positive people hospitalized has doubled since the end of June. Our hospital systems are managing this increase. Our facilities are watching their census closely and have plans in place in case they experience a medical surge. I will defer questions regarding their plans to the providers.

Free COVID-19 testing is available to anyone at our four Department of Health locations. Please call for an appointment by calling the telephone number of the location you'd like to visit. So, for our Keech Street Health Department location, please call: 386-871-3364; Holsonback, call: 386-274-0500, and press the pound (#) key; New Smyrna Beach Health Department, call: 386-871-3489, for an appointment. And, if you would like an appointment in Orange City, please call: 386-871-3405.

The Florida Department of Health is warning residents to be wary of potential Corona Virus related scams that target people during this pandemic. Telephone scams regarding COVID test results have been reported by Floridians. The Health Department does call people with positive test results and their close contacts. However, we do not ask for your Social Security number. Protect yourself; never share your personal or financial information either by email, text messages or over the phone. Government

agencies will never call and ask you for this type of personal information, nor for money. Do not click on any links in a text message or an email that you are unsure of. And, if someone shows up to your home and claims to work for the Florida Department of Health, or is dressed in protective medical gear, please ask them for verification. All of our staff have identification displayed.

Now, I'd like to remind everyone that you can do your part to stop the spread of this disease. Everyone should practice social distancing and wear a mask in public. This is the best way for everyone to protect each other.

In closing, please stay home if you are sick, and isolate. Please call a medical provider for any symptoms that are severe or are concerning to you, like trouble breathing or consistent pain or pressure in the chest, any new confusion, any inability to stay awake; you need to seek medical emergency care immediately. And, when you do call, make sure that you tell the person that you are speaking to that you may have COVID-19. If you've had COVID-19, please inform anyone that you've had close contact with that you have been infected, and you have exposed them. And, if you've been told by someone that you've come into close contact with that they have had COVID-19, please stay home and quarantine for 14 days. That is, if someone has told you they have COVID-19, and you have been in close contact, you should stay home and quarantine for 14 days. Thank you.

**Kevin Captain** – Director of Community Information of Volusia County

Thank you Ms. Boswell. I would like to thank all of our speakers. As a reminder, there is a County Council meeting scheduled for this upcoming Tuesday, July 21<sup>st</sup>. Public participation begins at 9:30 and the meeting itself begins at 10:00 a.m. You can view the agenda at [Volusia.org](http://Volusia.org), and you can listen or watch the meeting live at [Volusia.org/LiveMeeting](http://Volusia.org/LiveMeeting).

And, we simply cannot close today without reminding all of our viewers about the *Step Up Volusia* campaign. This is a countywide effort that includes all of the cities and municipalities, our chambers of commerce, our convention and visitors bureaus, hospitals and many other public agencies. I'd also like to give a shout out to the City of DeLand's, Chris Graham, and Holly Smith, from the Florida Department of Health in Volusia County, for their extra efforts in putting the Miracle Grow on the seeds for this campaign. Remember, *Step Up Volusia. Back Up. Wash Up. Mask Up.*

Thank you for all of you who are stepping up to help with this campaign. With that, I know we have a question from WKMG, for Chairman Kelley. Mr. Kelley?

**Question 1:** Council Chair, so there were concerns in New Smyrna Beach about overcrowding of the beach during the weekend from, like, tourists and locals. The question is, is the county trying to reassess the current mandate or restrictions or guidelines that we have right now in moving forward?

**Ed Kelley** - Chair, Volusia County Council

**Answer 1:** To answer that question, Mayor Russ Owen texted me yesterday, and we spoke briefly about the concerns they have, and some of the issues that he is facing down there. Since that time I have talked with our County Manager, George Recktenwald. I understand that he is, has been, and will be, in contact with the management of New Smyrna Beach to see what we can do to help with the situations that they have. A couple of the issues that he brought up, I don't know the answer to, and that is why I will leave those answers as they move forward and maybe getting the heads together to discuss it between management and us as elected, we can come up with something to help. And, that is what we will do. We are working to move that forward. Anything else?

Can I just say: Mask Up. Wash Up. Step Back. Step Up. Let's close it then? Thank you all, and stay safe. Mask Up. Wash Up. And, be safe.