

PRESS CONFERENCE

MARCH 17, 2020

Kevin Captain, Interim Community Information Director, County of Volusia

Kevin Captain, Interim Director of Volusia County Community Information. Thank you for joining us this evening. As we have said before this is an unprecedented situation. There continue to be many questions and the county is working diligently with many of its partners to address concerns and to provide information. Earlier today we had a Volusia County Council meeting, where our council members discussed the current state of affairs and the appropriate actions moving forward. A topic gaining a lot of attention today are our beaches. Volusia County have 47 miles of beaches that are highly accessible to the public. At this time and on the basis of the states messaging, the beaches remain open. The health and welfare of Volusia County Beach Safety personnel as well as the residents and visitors in Volusia County remain a top priority. That's why safe guards have been put in place to protect both our staff and our beach goers. And beyond that, Volusia County is working to ensure that all of our employees are safe as they continue to serve our community.

With that we are going to bring up Volusia County Chair, Ed Kelley. After that we will have some other speakers that will include County Manager, George Recktenwald, Volusia County Emergency Management Division Director, Jim Judge, and the Florida Department of Health administrator, Patricia Boswell. With that, Ed Kelley.

Ed Kelley, Volusia County Chair

Thank you Kevin. As Kevin mentioned we held a County Council meeting today and a large part, in fact, the most important part of what we did today was to make a decision regarding COVID-19. The county is following the recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and the Florida Department of Health as well as direction from the state level. As part of the governor's new executive order, new beach restrictions were imposed. The governor mandates that public follows CDC guidance on our public beaches by limiting gatherings to no more than 10 persons and distancing themselves by 6 feet. And also the state beaches will remain open. The governor left the beach closure to the discretion of local governments. Today the Volusia County Council extended its local state of emergency and took specific action to protect measures regarding the beach. We implemented the governor's executive order to limit gathering to no more than 10 people and mandate a distance of 6 feet. The council also authorized myself and the county manager to limit vehicular access to the beach, beach approaches, and county off beach parking as needed so that the groups can meet the distancing limits.

Our beaches are open to the public at the same time we are living in an environment where safety precautions must be taken. We have done so and we will continue to do so as circumstances demand for the protection of our citizens and visitors. And we have been saying since the

beginning, personal prevention is the key. If you have lived in Florida for at least a year, you have experienced a hurricane or maybe a threat of a hurricane. With a hurricane, we focus on preparedness and safety and then we wait. We can't change the path of the storm, but with your help we could help change the path of the COVID virus and if you could change the path of a hurricane I'm sure you will do what it took to make that change. We will all be willing to do what it took to make sure we kept that hurricane off shore.

While we can't change it, we can change the path of the Coronavirus and as a community we can lessen the impact and flatten the curve by that it means, each and every person in the county must take personal responsibility and heed the warnings. It may be inconvenient to cancel your plans or spend your weekend at home but these changes are what it takes to help protect us all. You may not be at risk but someone you know or love could be. Take personal responsibility seriously. With that I would like to invite Volusia County Emergency Management Division Director Jim Judge.

Jim Judge, Emergency Management Director, County of Volusia

Thank you Chairmen Kelley. Good evening everyone, what the chairman said is imperative, this crisis involves all of us. It involves all of us in our community and everyone in the state of Florida. We're doing everything we can, but we are relying on you also to help us to get through this situation. You may need to change your daily habits, avoid shopping at peak hours. Take advantage of delivery and pick up services. When retailers are available, if possible. Don't shake hands, I come from a long family of huggers so it's a little tough for me but social distancing. Shaking hands and even the elbow bump and the fist bump. We want to avoid all of that. Avoid crowded places and again maintaining that 6 foot perimeter. If you are not feeling well, stay home. We still have the flu, we still have strep throat that is going all around Volusia County. The emergency management division continues to coordinate with our partners. Lots of conference calls every day. We are pushing out a lot of information on our Facebook site. Which also uploads to our Volusia County Emergency Management app. So I would encourage everyone to both get on our app and get on our Facebook page. We are working closely with the state to ensure we are in line and taking advantage of all the opportunities available to us with the Florida Department of Health with the Florida Division of Emergency Management and also of course the CDC. We are making preparations as the situations progress to ensure we're prepared but again it's all of us together taking individual responsibilities the chairmen said so that we're all going through this together in a unified way. Our Emergency Operations Center is partially activated which further streamlines our efforts. So with that I would like to introduce Patricia Boswell, our next speaker.

Patricia Boswell, Director, Florida Department of Health in Volusia County

Good evening, I'm Patricia Boswell. I'm the administrator for the Florida Department of Health in Volusia County. It's just been a few days since I stood before you to talk for the first time

about the Coronavirus known as COVID-19 and a lot has changed. As of 3:45 today, there were 173 total Florida cases. This includes 6 Florida residents tested elsewhere.

An additional 19 non-Florida residents have tested positive in Florida. As of 3:45 today, the Florida Department of Health has announced 9 total cases of COVID-19 in Volusia County. Currently we do not have any evidence of community spread in Volusia County. The Florida Department of Health in Volusia County continues to focus on identifying, testing and isolating people at increased risk for spreading COVID-19. These are containment measures.

The actions that have been taken today by our Volusia County Government are mitigation measures, to help slow the spread of COVID-19 and protect those vulnerable members of our community. Finally, if you are experiencing respiratory symptoms and have not traveled recently, or have not been exposed to someone who has been tested positive for COVID-19, please contact your primary care physician or an urgent care center. Physicians and urgent care centers can conduct COVID-19 testing through private labs. With that I will introduce our County Manager George Recktenwald.

George Recktenwald, County Manager, County of Volusia

Good evening. Please know that as leaders our key priority is the safety and welfare of our community. County officials are extensively collaborating with our cities, the Florida Department of Health and the Florida Department of Emergency Management about appropriate mitigation measures. This afternoon, Governor DeSantis issued a new executive order imposing a series of new restrictions related to COVID-19 effective 5:00 p.m. today. These new restrictions include shutting down bars, pubs and night clubs. The Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation was authorized by the governor to enforce these restrictions and take additional measures as to bars, pubs and night clubs.

The governor has ordered restaurants to limit occupancy to 50%, maintain a 6 foot distance between groups of patrons and limiting parties to no more than 10 people. The governor also imposed new restaurant employee restrictions. We appreciate the continued efforts and cooperation of our residents and visitors during this time. It is important to remember we are not alone in this situation, this is a community, in fact a nationwide issue and we are relying on everyone to do their part.

We are doing everything possible to keep governmental services operating, while mitigating the risk. Essential personnel have been identified to ensure the county services will continue. We are diligently working to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our county team so that we are being able to continue serving the community at this time of need. With that I am going to turn it back to Kevin Captain.

Kevin Captain, Interim Community Information Director, County of Volusia

Thank you Mr. Recktenwald, and thank you all. Just to recap this is a very dynamic situation. Things are changing rapidly. County services may need to be amended as appropriate. As new

information becomes available and further decisions are made we'll continue to make it available to you all. As a reminder the best place to find the information is [Volusia.org/Coronavirus](https://www.volusia.org/coronavirus).

We also encourage you to look at the Emergency Management Facebook page and you can also download the Emergency Management app for Volusia County. With that we will open it up to questions and as we do we ask that you raise your hand. We are going to have someone come around with a microphone because this is being Facebook lived and we want to be able to have the audience listen to the question. ---- Any questions?

Question #1

How is the, should I say the enforcement mechanism of telling people that they can't be on the beach, how is that different from when you have, like for example lifeguards telling people to get off the beach due to lightning or high tide or some other problem. How is it different in this case?

Kevin Captain, Interim Community Information Director, County of Volusia

So, you know, a couple things, beach safety personnel, they are going to go out and do their job like they do normally but they have also been provided PPE kits, they have been encouraged to practice social distancing and they have also been encouraged to use their professional judgement, their discretion when it comes to handling law enforcement matters.

Question #2

What is PPE?

Kevin Captain, Interim Community Information Director, County of Volusia

Personal Protective Equipment

Question #3

My question is more to the enforcement power, it seems like it's not that different from just hey there's lightning, get off the beach. Would that be accurate?

Kevin Captain, Interim Community Information Director, County of Volusia

Well every situation is gonna be different, but violators will be educated first. You know certainly we don't want to have any arrests on the beach and that would be something that would be different. But again beach safety personnel are going to be approaching violators and probably using their public address system to break up groups more than 10 and to give educational reminders to make sure that the beach goers stay their safe 6 feet apart for distance and a crowd no more than 10.

Question #4

There's been talk about compensation that the county might issue some kind of compensation to people. I know that President Trump talked about sending, and there still needs to be a lot of approvals I guess for this, to give a check to people. Is Volusia County contemplating anything similar to that?

Kevin Captain, Interim Community Information Director, County of Volusia

Well because the situation is so fluid and dynamic those things are being looked at, but uh that will be addressed as more information comes forward.

Question #5

So I realize the Superintendent isn't here but we just got word that Governor DeSantis is going to remote instructions for all schools for the rest of the school year. So what is the county going to do about that?

Kevin Captain, Interim Community Information Director, County of Volusia

That question we would refer to Dr. Fritz. --- Any other questions? --- With that we thank you for your attention and we'll go ahead and we'll close this news conference and again to reiterate we want everyone to have responsibility in this as well. We are asking for every person to take ownership of this issue that we're facing as well as Government's role as well. Have a good evening.

Question #6

so the question is, any further briefings scheduled?

Kevin Captain, Interim Community Information Director, County of Volusia

Al that's gonna be situational and they will be scheduled as deemed appropriate. Thank you.
Thank you everybody. Good evening.