

Charlotte County update for 3/25/20

Charlotte closes facilities to safeguard public, employees

By Hector Flores, Charlotte County Administrator

Charlotte County's highest priority is to ensure the safety and well-being of the public and our employees. As guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Gov. Ron DeSantis is updated, we're taking the necessary steps to help stem the spread of COVID-19, the disease caused by the new coronavirus.

On Tuesday, I ordered all county facilities except boat ramps and parks to be closed to the public until further notice. We urge everyone to heed CDC guidance on social distancing when using the facilities that remain open. We know the closures inconvenience users of our great facilities, but stopping the spread of this coronavirus requires us to take actions we hope will be temporarily.

My team is updating human resources policies and plans to adapt to future changes, including the possibility of closing all but essential government functions, as other counties and cities have done. The situation currently doesn't warrant that here. Short of a closure, we already have some employees working from home and are making sure we have the resources in place to enable more staff to do so to continue to serve the public.

While most facilities closed, we continue to provide services online, by mail, by phone and via drop boxes for certain county business, such as paying bills or returning library books. Our libraries are offering curbside services. Visit CharlotteCountyFL.gov and click the COVID-19 Information banner, then click Online Services.

Updated and factual information is critical during a crisis. The county holds daily conference calls with all departments, local government agencies, local and regional businesses, such as the hospitals and FPL, and my administration team. We created a rumor control section on the COVID-19 Information page to debunk rumors we hear and read.

The business disruption caused by the COVID-19 outbreak is causing hardship among many of our residents. Our Human Services Department is taking calls and referring people to help. Call 2-1-1 or 941-205-2161 for residents in Englewood and TTY users. The department is also working with county non-profits, businesses and faith communities to raise money and distribute food and other necessities. The non-profit umbrella group Community Organizations Active in a Disaster administers a website where people can ask for help and contribute donations. Visit <https://coadfl.org>.

Please accept my heartfelt best wishes for your continued good health. Stay home if you can, especially if you're elderly or have a serious health condition. Avoid crowds of 10 or more people. Wash your hands regularly or use hand sanitizer. Our community always pulls together in a crisis. I know we will get through this one, too. Be kind to each other and help however you can.

Hector Flores is the Charlotte County administrator. Readers may reach him at Hector.Flores@CharlotteCountyFL.gov.