

Charlotte County update for 4/1/20

Charlotte

By Hector Flores, Charlotte County Administrator

As we begin a new month in this unprecedented environment, Charlotte County continues to act to protect the public and help stop the spread of the new coronavirus and the COVID-19 disease it causes. Having closed facilities to the public (except boat ramps and park trails), we are following Centers for Disease Control and Florida Department of Health guidelines on employee teleworking, self-isolating among elderly or staff with health conditions, social distancing in offices and good hygiene.

The governor's executive order issued Wednesday closed all but essential businesses. For a list of industries affected, visit www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov and click the COVID-19 Information banner at the top of the page.

For the latest information on local cases, visit www.floridahealthcovid19.gov or contact the COVID-19 Call Center at 866-779-6121 or COVID-19@flhealth.gov.

I want to assure you we are deploying every resource possible to manage this crisis. Staff participate in a morning conference call that includes participants from the Department of Health, law enforcement, public safety, utility providers, hospitals and other local government agencies. We identify needs, discuss solutions, organize aid and supply missions, craft messaging to the public and ensure everyone is on the same page.

We are working with non-profit partners to gather and distribute help to those who need it. We held our first food distribution event on Monday. More are scheduled. For information, call our Human Services Department at 2-1-1 (or 941-205-2161 for residents in Englewood and TTY users) or visit www.Charlotte211.com. Another resource is the non-profit umbrella group Community Organizations Active in a Disaster. Visit their website, coadfl.org, to ask for help or contribute donations. Of course, our faith communities are responding vigorously in this time of need and uncertainty.

Accurate information is vital more than ever. No, tanks are not being deployed in Charlotte County, the Gasparilla Causeway is not closing, helicopters are not flying nighttime disinfectant spraying missions, there's no curfew. We have created a page on the county website that debunks rumors and provides links to local and state and federal agencies. Visit www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov. There also is information about online services we continue to offer and an updated list of closures and restrictions.

This is uncharted territory for all of us. We know people are worried, stressed and some are sick, including with COVID-19. We're here and we're listening. We need all of you to get our community through this. Help where you can. Stay home whenever you can. Wash your hands. Take care of each other. Be kind.

There's a long road ahead and once the virus is contained, we have to repair the economic damage it is causing. All of us, together as a community, can see it through.

2020 Census

We received some promising news on another front this week. Our Census Bureau partner specialist provided an updated response rate of Charlotte County residents answering the 2020 Census. Statewide, the response rate is 34.3%, but in Charlotte County, residents are responding at a 40.7% rate.

Thanks to everyone who has responded. If you haven't yet, please take some time (just a few minutes online, by phone or by mail) to ensure as many county residents are counted as possible.

To respond, visit www.2020census.gov. You can use the ID number provided in a recent mailing or just enter your address to get started.

An accurate count is vital. The population figures determine everything from education funding, transportation infrastructure, and legislative and congressional representation. Companies also use Census data to make decisions on business locations and investment.

Do your part. Be counted.

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