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Riverside County

NEWS RELEASE

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First COVID-19 cases announced in western Riverside County

Public Health Officer Dr. Cameron Kaiser today announced the first two cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) in western Riverside County. Both are expected to recover.

Also, Kaiser confirmed the third death connected to COVID-19. The individual was from the Coachella Valley.

Riverside County has 16 cases, and up until today's announcement, nearly all the cases have been from the Coachella Valley.

"We knew getting west county cases was an inevitability," said Kaiser, who on Monday reduced the maximum gathering order from 250 to 10 in light of the comments from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "The disease curve must be flattened, and that's why we're already intervening as early as possible so that our vulnerable residents are protected."

As the county's response continues to expand and testing increases, Kaiser said the number of confirmed cases will likely jump.

“We need to have a greater idea of the extent of the spread of COVID-19,” Kaiser said. “The more testing that is completed, the better the picture we have of what we are facing and what steps need to be taken to better protect the community.”

Kaiser’s new health order restricts mass gatherings of 10 people or more, and orders that gatherings with fewer than 10 people must have enough available room to maintain six feet of space between attendees. This is known as social distancing. There are limited exemptions to the 10 person rule, including healthcare facilities, grocery stores and daycare centers. Because of the rules, restaurants would likely be limited to serving take-out.

“The limit of 10 people in a space applies to many businesses, attractions and houses of worship,” said Kaiser. “That means restaurants can’t do dine-in: you’ll have to get take-out or drive-thru. That means services at churches, synagogues and mosques go online. That means some gyms and bars won’t be able to stay open at all. Minimize your trips, buy only what you need and stay home as you can. We need to flatten the curve of disease.”

Kaiser has also ordered the closure of all Riverside County schools from elementary to college until April 30. He also has recommended that senior citizens and those with underlying health conditions in the Coachella Valley avoid any non-essential travel. The orders have impacted religious services, weddings, sporting events and classrooms countywide.

Residents are urged to visit www.rivcoph.org/coronavirus for updated information. They can also find information on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/countyriver-sidedepartmentofpublichealth>) and on Twitter @rivcodoc.

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