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**Contact:**

Jose Arballo Jr., RUHS-Public Health  
951-712-3705

Riverside County Joint Information Center  
951-955-5087

## **Health officials remind residents to take simple steps to protect themselves from COVID-19**

*More than 1,000 residents have died from coronavirus*

Health officials remind residents that while COVID-19 has been slowing in Riverside County, the virus remains active as more than 1,000 residents have died from it. Taking simple actions like wearing a face covering, keeping distance from others and washing hands frequently will slow the spread and provide up to 95 percent protection.

The first coronavirus-related death in Riverside County was reported March 15 – an Indio resident in his late 70s – and the 1,000th reported today (Aug. 28). Those who died were as varied as the residents of the county – the youngest was a 19-year-old woman from Riverside. The oldest deaths were found in two 104-year-old Riverside County residents, including a man from Riverside and female from Mecca.

The number of confirmed coronavirus cases recently passed 50,000 in Riverside County and more than 40,000 have recovered from the virus.

“It is so important to remember that these numbers are people, Riverside County residents who have families; they are our neighbors, friends, brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers,” said Kim Saruwatari, director of the Riverside County Public Health Department. “In many cases, the tragedy of their deaths was compounded by the circumstances brought on by the virus itself.”

Those who were hospitalized prior to their deaths often could not have visitors because of the restrictions imposed by medical facilities to prevent the spread of coronavirus. Doctors and nurses were often the only companions COVID-19 patients had before death.

While deaths have reached the sad milestone, Riverside County health officials point out that data related to the spread of coronavirus has improved over the last few weeks. The number of those hospitalized with COVID-19 has dropped, along with ICU cases. The positivity rate in Riverside County is nine percent -- inching closer to the state-required 8 percent or less – and the case rate, which was at more than 200 cases per 100,000 residents, is now under 150.

This data indicates a slowing of the disease’s spread throughout the month of August. Riverside County launched an action plan at the end of July to focus public education on preventing the disease, including handing out more than 10 million masks to the community and launching a pledge to fight COVID campaign.

“Every death due to COVID-19 is a tragedy,” said Dr. Cameron Kaiser, Riverside County public health officer. “One way we can honor their memory is to do what we can to prevent COVID-19, so that other families won’t suffer the same loss these families have. Even though most people with COVID-19 will survive, these people are indisputably casualties. We have to take this virus seriously.”

Visit [www.PledgeToFightCOVID.com](http://www.PledgeToFightCOVID.com) to take the pledge.

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