



Aug. 3, 2020

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State fixing technical issue causing lag in case reporting

Delay may give impression Riverside County cases are slowing down; not the case, say local health experts

Riverside County health officials urge the public to stay vigilant in protecting themselves from the coronavirus, despite an appearance the disease is slowing locally.

There is currently a technical issue with the California Department of Public Health's electronic disease reporting system. The California Reportable Disease Information Exchange (commonly called CalREDIE) is experiencing delays.

Electronic laboratory reporting is not being submitted to CalREDIE's system in a real-time manner. Riverside County's positive cases in recent days may appear that the numbers are holding steady or flattening, but that's simply not true, said Public Health Director Kim Saruwatari.

"This is an integration, technical issue," Saruwatari said. "Simply put, there is a significant lag in how the information is being fed into the system. We're anticipating significant increases in case reporting this week."

This is why Saruwatari and the county's Public Health Officer Dr. Cameron Kaiser said it's as important as ever for residents to battle the virus in every way possible. Embracing the county's new campaign – Masks are Medicine – is one way to do that, Dr. Kaiser said.

"Practicing social distancing, washing one's hands routinely and wearing face coverings are critical steps to protecting yourself and your friends and loved ones," Dr. Kaiser said. "We did it before and we can do it again."

The California Department of Public Health informed public health departments of the delay in an e-mail on Friday (Aug. 1). Today, the CDPH informed local agencies that it is committed to resolving the issue as quickly as possible and has “urgently escalated this issue to leadership.”

Saruwatari said the delay impacts how public health workers can chase down cases for investigation, contact tracing and, ultimately, controlling the disease. The county’s testing positivity rate is also impacted by the delay.

Hospitalization and death rates are not impacted as they are reported directly to the county through different systems. A total of 737 residents have succumbed to COVID-19 and roughly 425 residents are currently being cared for in Riverside County hospitals. More than 38,000 have tested positive for the virus.

“We’re hopeful this technical issue will be resolved quickly so we can continue our fight to protect our county residents,” Saruwatari said.

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