



**Riverside
University**
HEALTH SYSTEM
Public Health

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Riverside County health officials announce three new novel coronavirus cases (COVID-19) in Coachella Valley

Riverside University Health System-Public Health is announcing three new cases of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in the Coachella Valley.

Dr. Cameron Kaiser, Riverside County public health officer, said health investigators believe the three infections were either the result of travel into areas where COVID-19 has been confirmed, or contact with a known case. Two of the individuals have been isolated at home, Kaiser said, while the third is being cared for at a Coachella Valley hospital.

The announcement comes shortly after Kaiser announced over the weekend Riverside County's first locally-acquired case of a patient who is being cared for at Eisenhower Health in Rancho Mirage. Public health investigators have not been able to determine how the individual was infected, Kaiser said, so it is now considered a case of "community spread."

Community spread involves transmission of an illness for which the source of infection is unknown. It indicates that the virus was not contracted through relevant travel history or contact to a known case of COVID-19, and suggests that the virus is present in the community.

Kaiser said he is recommending those in the Coachella Valley who are elderly and have underlying health conditions, including individuals who are HIV positive, limit non-essential travel and avoid large public gatherings.

In addition, Riverside County now has a second confirmed case arising from the Diamond Princess cruise ship. This former passenger is also receiving treatment at a Northern California hospital, and like the other former passenger from the Diamond Princess, has not been to Riverside County since leaving the ship. This brings the total number of Riverside County COVID-19 cases to six.

“We are very concerned for the individuals who have contracted the virus in Riverside County,” said Dr. Kaiser. “We wish these folks, and the two residents in Northern California, a full recovery. Our thoughts are with them and their families at this time.”

Public health recommendations for all Riverside County residents during community spread:

- Practice social distancing, which is remaining out of places where people meet or gather and avoid using public transportation, if possible.
- Do not attend work, school or events when sick. Stay home.
- Cough into your elbow or tissue.
- Wash hands frequently and use hand sanitizer often.
- Stay away from anyone who is sick.

On Sunday, Dr. Kaiser declared a public health emergency, which will support the county’s planning and response efforts. It is also a strong signal to the community that the disease has been introduced to the area. The emergency declaration is set to be ratified by the Riverside County Board of Supervisors at their regularly scheduled meeting on Tuesday, March 10.

Riverside County officials also activated the medical health department operations center last week to better coordinate public messaging and planning among community partners.

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