

- Let's get started. Good afternoon, today is Friday, April 3rd, 2020 and you are watching the daily media briefing for the San Luis Obispo County COVID-19 Emergency Response. My name is Michelle Shoresman and I'm the designated media contact for our public information team. Thank you to all the members of the media for being here today, and for those of the public tuning in at home. This afternoon we have three speakers for you. We will begin with Emergency Services Director and County Administrative Officer, Wade Horton. He will be followed by San Luis Obispo County Sheriff, Ian Parkinson. That's Ian Parkinson, I-A-N P-A-R-K-I-N-S-O-N. Our last speaker today will be County Health Officer, Dr. Penny Borenstein. After Dr. Borenstein speaks all the speakers will be available for questions. Once again we request that the speakers repeat the question before answering them. And thank you to Robin Babb, our sign language interpreter. And now San Luis Obispo County Emergency Services Director and County Administrative Officer, Wade Horton.

- Thanks Michelle. Good afternoon, Wade Horton County CAO and Emergency Services Director. I wanna start today by recognizing our nurses and healthcare workers. And I wanna talk with you directly about concerns that we've heard regarding whether or not our frontline workers have protective gear or PPE, that personal protective equipment that they need. Our nurses, techs, EMTs, and physicians, all our healthcare workers are stepping forward to protect our community in this crisis. They are our heroes. They are also our neighbors and family members. They're putting themselves on the front lines to protect us. And we have responsibility as a community to do everything that we can to protect them. I regularly speak with the CEOs of all four hospitals in San Luis Obispo County to determine whether they have the PPE they need to protect their workforce. Since this pandemic began, several have told me that they need more PPE and we have been able to fill those orders. I spoke with them this morning and they confirmed that they currently have the PPE that they need. We have a logistics team working around the clock to purchase PPE, and are getting it out to our healthcare workers. Each hospital is also aggressively sourcing and acquiring PPE to meet the projected demand. We are also accepting PPE donations. I ask non-healthcare organizations that have PPE to donate those supplies to our effort to fight this pandemic. The community is stepping up. People like Brad Goodrow, President of Mid State Solid Waste & Recycling, who donated approximately 10,000 N95 masks. If you have PPE to donate please let us know through [readySLO.org](http://readySLO.org). It's important to remember that we all play a role in making sure our frontline workers are protected. You've heard recent discussion about wearing a cloth mask if you're sick, or if you want extra layer of protection when you go out in public. Remember, this is not about personally going out and buying N95 masks or surgical masks. We need those for our healthcare workers. Please leave those medical grade masks for the people who need them most, so they have the protection they need to take care of you. Their health and safety must be our top priority. Not only because they care for us when we are sick, but also because they are our neighbors, our friends, our family members, we're all in this together. I'll now turn it over to Sheriff Ian Parkinson to touch on community outreach regarding the shelter-at-home order.

- Thank you Wade. Good afternoon, I'm Ian Parkinson, Sheriff-Coroner I'm gonna talk to you a little bit about our enforcement and our process that we have put in place so. I'm gonna start and tell you that generally we get our complaints regarding an issue in the community either through our call center, or through our proactive enforcement. Every day I have a conference call with all the chief law

enforcement officers of the county. We discuss enforcement efforts, we've discussed concerns, and try to coordinate our best effort to be on the same page. So I mentioned how these efforts start, they start with the phone call or observation from a deputy in the field. I think there's a couple things that need to be kind of cleared up, they keep tending to be cycled around and that is first, law enforcement is not making traffic stops on people out there that ask where they're going. That's not what are purpose is, our purpose is identify issues out in the community, either through businesses, or through social gatherings, where we either make contact, but we certainly are not making traffic stops to do that. Nor are we issuing citations for overnight parking, things that might be normal day in and day out practice, but during this time they are not occurring. The other thing I wanted to mention was in regards to the National Guard. We hear a lot of talk about National Guard deployment, National Guard vehicles traveling through the county. Right now business is usual for the National Guard. They train at two bases here in our county, but there is no deployment planned, there is no deployment order from the state for them to deploy in any other way other than for humanitarian purposes. Our goal enforcement is really simple, it's voluntary enforcement, we want people to follow the rules. At the end of the day if we can come out of this and we have zero arrests and zero citations, or zero actions against a business, then that's what we want, and that is what we're striving for. So far we've been successful in those attempts. And we're hoping that that continues. There have been no arrests, there have been no citations for failing to follow the order. If enforcement is needed by us, the county process that we put in place is first that notification. We notify the businesses that they're operating outside of the order. And we ask for their voluntary compliance. 99.9% of the time they immediately take action and follow. If they were not to do that and not follow that direction, then our next step would be through a court order, ordering them closed, a suspension, immediate suspension of their business license so they could not operate, and in, only in, I guess dire circumstances would it lead to an arrest or a citation, which are both possible. However, we think in this community that we won't get to that point. So approximately to date there have been about 357 complaints. Of that 357, 113 were deemed valid complaints. So what I mean by that is if a person calls in and says, "Hey, there's businesses open and doing business," but they are a essential business, and the complaint says that they're doing curbside deliveries, just as they're supposed to then that is deemed essentially not a valid complaint. If there's any doubt we follow up on it immediately, go out, watch the activity of the business and if they are not following the guidelines then we may contact and request that they cease, and/or follow the guidelines. Relative to enforcement I just wanna add a couple things. In the month of March this last year, or this year that we just completed, we had 1,400 fewer calls for service for the Sheriff's Office. That's a pretty significant drop compared to March of last year. So what we've seen is is people staying at home, less activity, less crime, less reports and calls for service. So that's been a good thing. The Sheriff's Office has actually stepped up patrol. What we have done is we've added more deputies on the street than we've ever had right now, and that's for a couple reasons. Number one, the public's concern, and the public's worried. And we want to make sure that they feel safe and see a black and white patrol car out there. Second is we have a lot of businesses that are left unoccupied because of the closure. We have a right, or a responsibility to try to protect those businesses from crime. So deploying more deputies is essential during this time. In the area of safety, want to, just encourage what has been repeated time after time on these press conferences and that is social distancing and hygiene. Those are extremely important things. The second thing that we have noticed a lot is children mingling together out on the street at parks, beaches, other things. And so I wanna personally implore our parents to please don't allow this. Unless they're from the same family, this is how this is potentially transmitted back to your home. So I

would encourage that as hard as it for people to be cooped up the house with their kids all day long, look for other activities to occupy your kid, your daughter, your son, outside of the home, you know, on walks and parks but isolate your family from others the best you can, it's very important. And the last thing I'll mention, in regards to enforcement, you know right now we've been very pleased with the behavior of our residents. They have complied, we're seeing a lot of voluntary compliance, we're seeing a lot of people that understand the issue. The only concern moving forward as long as this thing stretches out, that people could get impatient, that people could start deciding that they need that social interaction. And I would encourage them in the future to please consider that the more we're in this together as Wade mentions, the better off we're going to be in the long run. That we are going to get through this and restore us back to some type of normal life. So that is all and I'd like to turn it over to Dr. Borenstein.

- Thank you Sheriff Parkinson, important messages that we're hearing. So I will give the daily update on where we are with this disease in terms of number of cases we are at 93 today. I have consistently started reporting the number that have been recovered, and that number today stands at 57. What's important about that is the percentage is 61%, so of all of the people who have gotten this disease a majority of them have recovered. And that's consistent with what we know about this disease. I think people, understandably so are very concerned that should they get it this could be a really bad situation, but again, for the vast majority, more than 80% of individuals recover without any issues and many of them, most of them in fact, have mild symptoms. We do unfortunately though have individuals in our county, and the number is ticking up ever so slightly, who are having severe cases. So now of our total six hospitalized patients, four of them are in fact in intensive care. I do wanna say though on the, as far as hospitalization goes we have had many more who have had hospital stays, but they have been short-lived and that's what we wanna see. They're averaging three to four days in a hospital and not getting to intensive care for the majority of them. And that is really important because we are beginning to really understand that people who wind up in a critical care situation, and especially those who wind up on a ventilator, that they are the ones who are having really the poorest outcomes. So we like to see our intensive care numbers, and of course our persons on ventilators as our lowest numbers and that is happening. I do wanna talk about testing of our healthcare workers. We started reporting our numbers yesterday. We have ticked up just a small bit, we're at 15 healthcare workers having tested positive. We sent out a provider advisory yesterday to make sure that all of our healthcare workers, that includes our emergency medical system, first responders, are at that top tier of getting priority laboratory testing through the public health lab. So I wanna use this opportunity to make sure that our healthcare workers know that we understand that they are the ones who are putting themselves on the line. That is not only true for healthcare workers, they're are many others who are serving our community through essential services, but the people who we most need to take care of the sickest patients are getting priority testing and all of our healthcare workers should if they have anyone on their staff, or in their clinics, or in their offices that needs a test, that they can get that test through the public health laboratory. And they can do so by either calling our Public Health Main Information Line, 805-781-5500, or perhaps better is to go onto [readySLO.org](https://readySLO.org) and select the healthcare provider tab, and then right there they will see by a click of requesting a referral form, where they can make the referral for themselves, or for any member of their clinical staff to take that as needed to the healthcare department, by appointment, to get tested. For the remainder of the community we are continuing to

see that private laboratories, more and more are coming online throughout the state. We are continuing to see one or two labs coming through from provider, from laboratories that we are not even all that familiar with, so we now have about six different laboratories for whom we have gotten positive results. We are continuing to try to plug away at working with the state and the laboratory system to fix what appears to be a technical issue in our inability at the moment to get the total number of people who have been tested at private laboratories and we hope very much to be able to bring our community those numbers in the near future. I want to address a little bit further the issue of face covers or masks, you heard Mr. Horton talk about that some. So I wanna reiterate what we said here yesterday, which is we are following the state's guidance that was put out two days ago. That basically says that using some manner of face cover, be it a homemade mask, a cloth, a bandana, a scarf, anything that puts a barrier between you and the other individuals in your sights, is something that is more and more being looked to as potentially a means of reducing transmission. There is new studies out that say that it's not just a cough or sneeze that may be the direct communicability of this germ, but maybe even through animated talking, or breathing heavily, that that may be also a means of transmission. We think that that may be why more information is coming out that people are able to actually spread this disease without the classic respiratory symptoms of coughing. So that said it certainly is something that people can choose to use as a means of protection, especially if they are in circumstances where they need to be close with other individuals. But as you heard our emergency services director say we absolutely do not want to use our precious resources of respirator masks, N95s, or even surgical masks which have applications in healthcare settings for sick individuals. So we are telling the public that, please feel free to use these face coverings, they may add some additional protection for our community, but not at the expense of using the supply that we need to tackle the disease straight up in our healthcare facilities. I just also wanna add to that though and reiterate that the masks should not be used in place of all the measures that we have consistently said that are tried and true. Which is hand hygiene, handwashing, using hand sanitizer if you don't have that soap and water, staying away from people who are sick at all times in this pandemic, keeping that distance of six feet so that we don't even allow for the situation of spread through breathing or talking, and staying home of course when you're sick. So with that I will turn it over to questions.

- [Reporter] I have a couple questions for Sheriff Parkinson. We've seen in Santa Barbara County up to the south, Sheriff's Office employees, including deputies, test positive. Anything like that happen here so far? And what kind of precautions are you taking to make sure that you're minimizing that opportunity?

- So the question, now that I've read the sign that said repeat the question again is that, we have other deputies and outside of this area that have tested positive, have we had anything like that happen in this county? So the short answer is no. We have tested several employees that we believe displayed symptoms and they've all come back negative, so we've been very fortunate in that area. You may know that two Riverside deputies just passed away that were positive for COVID and that's certainly troubling to us. When we started down this road, as soon as this direction came that this county was going to be a leader in starting this shelter-at-home, we put in safety practices with our employees. So all of our employees are tested everyday and not COVID tested, but they're tested for temperatures, they're asked about symptoms. We don't hesitate if they've had an exposure to quarantine them, either

through Dr. Borenstein or through our department. So we're taking every precaution that we can. They all have proper PPE. They also have proper procedures on what to do. And so it's very important to us that employees remain protected. We are the front line not as far front as the health community that are treating them, but we still have daily interactions with people that we don't know whether or not they are positive. So trying to take precautions, trying for them to understand that they have to protect themselves. But at the end of the day we have a job to do and that means being out in front and taking some of these chances. The other concern that we have is the jail. It's an enclosed environment and as you've heard in the news, the release of inmates throughout the state is a concern. And the concern is, is that you're walking into an enclosed environment and if you have somebody that potentially is infected it could infect others. So we're very diligent about that, nobody enters the jail including officers from other agencies without being tested, temperature taken, questioned whether or not they're displaying any or have any symptoms. Inmates that come into intake the same thing. Any inmate, and we have had as reported a couple cases on the flu. We've had to quarantine some of our housing units, we're all now completely off quarantine, we're passed the flu. But those inmates themselves were tested for flu and beyond that we have had some inmates that we have tested for COVID and they've come back negative. So, so far we've been very lucky. We're constantly looking for ways to make sure that we're practicing safety precautions, cleaning hands, all of that like the public.

- [Reporter] Also speaking of the jail, we've seen in neighboring counties the jail population decrease because of COVID, maybe low level inmates be released, has that happened here?

- The only thing that's changed for our normal practice of release is we did have a court order in giving us authority to release. And we started going through that list of high-risk inmates. And the criteria really was the age of the inmate, their health conditions, and then their crime. So regardless of those first two, if their crime was a violence, or put public in jeopardy then they would remain. Of that first order we identified five inmates out of that list that we fit the criteria for early release. But we've limited to that at this point. And now it's kind of a case-by-case basis in working closely with the County Counsel Office for the county, the district attorney, and also the court system.

- [Reporter] So you've had five early release?

- We had five early release under the court order, general releases that we're allowed to do meaning several days early, those have been the standard practice through years. Our population, like everybody else has, has gone down primarily because of the lack of bookings. And so we've encouraged other agencies on low level crimes, misdemeanors, that are able to be cited in the field that they do that. But I've also told the chiefs directly that I do not want them to feel, their departments to feel that they can't book somebody in jail for acts of violence or acts of concerns for public safety.

- [Reporter] I have some questions about PPE, I'm not sure who to direct those to, Wade or Dr. Borenstein.

- [Dr. Borenstein] We'll both, both have to

- [Reporter] Great, okay.

- Questions about PPE.

- [Reporter] Yeah, so at last night's vigil nurses said they don't have an adequate supply of PPE. In the past the county health has said it has a supply. But the hospitals have not asked for it, is that still the situation?

- So the question was, there are some, there was a vigil held last night, some of the nurses in our community were expressing concern that they, hospitals have not asked for supply, or that the county doesn't have an adequate supply and neither of those is true. So we have gotten requests from all of our hospitals for PPE. We have been able to fulfill those requests and we do have supply in hand. We don't have any outstanding requests from the hospitals at this time, but we have gotten requests in the past and we've been able to meet them and the hospitals have told us, as you heard from Mr. Horton today, saying that they are complying with all of the standards for personal protection of their employees, and that they have adequate supplies.

- [Reporter] Can you confirm that nurses are reusing equipment such as masks or not, that are not meant for multi-use, or face covering, or using face coverings that aren't sufficient.

- So the question was can I confirm that nurses are using face covering that are not of a medical grade

- Or reusing--

- Or reusing, so no I can't confirm that but I do adhere to the, I do believe that message that we have heard, not just message, we've been in direct communication with the hospital presidents. They are not issuing anything other than medical grade PPE. Yes in some cases they are reusing PPE but it's all in accordance with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance as to what can be used and when and how it can be used. So for instance, goggles and face shields are perfectly amenable to cleaning and

reuse. And in some cases N95s are maybe used for more than one patient and kept, because it's the person who's wearing it that's being protected. So as long as it's no soiled and it's in good condition and all the elastic and the fitting is good then, then this is a way that we've actually not only been allowed to but recommended to stretch the PPE availability.

- [Reporter] And then does the county have a stockpile of N95 masks to distribute, if not does it expect to receive more?

- So the question was does the county have a stockpile of N95 masks, and if not do we expect to, do we expect to receive more, so both yes. We do have a stock in hand now, as I think I said yesterday, there was some concern that perhaps we're setting aside all of our stock for future patients and that's not the case. We are setting aside some if it's not requested on a day in, day out basis we are definitely ensuring that our alternate care site will be able to receive patients. But we also have been able to fulfill the requests as they're coming in. We also have additional orders in place and we are continuing to see those orders filled, perhaps not as quickly as we would like, but we are continuing to get new supply of PPE. Any other questions?

- I have another, but I just wanted to wait and see. We just had a question about testing. Is the county using all of the, I know you've said in the past you have a 50 test capacity per day, are you using all of those tests? And if you're not why is that the case.

- The question is, is the county using, meaning it's full capacity for testing. It varies day to day. On some days, not very recently, we were reaching capacity, we then pulled back a little bit because the demand was greater than our capacity. So as the commercial laboratory system came up we were deferring the less high-risk folks to use their own providers and urgent care to get a test through the private system. When that happened we did see a downturn in our numbers. We have by virtue of putting out more messaging to providers about who we are able to test, we have in the last couple of days seen an uptick. I don't know, I don't think that we have hit our absolute maximum but we're working our way back up to that point.

- [Reporter] And then I was curious how are you guys, what are you guys to test, you kinda alluded to this, testing the front line healthcare workers? Are you testing them after symptoms? Like, what, do they have meet the same criteria, as other patients?

- Right, so the question is, what is the criteria for testing healthcare workers. It is the same for everyone else, we are not offering testing for anyone who's completely asymptomatic. But we are, we have definitely loosened the criteria for what symptoms one has to present with. So early on when the understanding of this disease was that 90% of the patients had fever and 2/3 of them had cough and,

you know, we were looking for those very specific symptoms. As we've learned more about the disease and that there can be a greater variety of symptoms, or especially a even lower grade fever or temperature in the very first days of the disease. We are not, we're not holding tight to the fact that you have to have a fever of a certain level and that you have to have that cough, so. We have loosened those criteria. All right, thank you.

- Thank you all again for coming today and for tuning in at home. Just a few final reminders as usual and one new announcement. All of our resources as I've said before are available on [readySLO.org](http://readySLO.org). Also, don't forget about our recorded Public Health Information Line that's available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. As well as our Phone Assistance Center that you can answer, ask questions of a real person seven days a week between eight and five. And also one more plug for our Medical Reserve Corps, please go online and register for that at [readySLO.org](http://readySLO.org). This is our last regularly scheduled briefing for the week. Starting next week we'll be moving to a slightly different schedule for these briefings. Going forward these briefings will be held on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at 3:15 p.m. If there's need to get urgent information out to the public between those times, then we will put out a media advisory as quickly as possible and call you all back here for that urgent information. In the meantime please remember to tune in on San Luis Obispo County Public Health's Facebook page, or on our county homepage to see these recorded briefings. And you can also find them on KCOY, and KSBY. Thank you, be well, and we will see you all on Monday at 3:15.