

Michelle Shoresman:

Good afternoon. My name is Michelle Shoresman and I'm the designated media contact for the San Luis Obispo County Covid-19 public information response team. This afternoon, once again, we have our Emergency Services Director and County Administrative Officer, Wade Horton, and County Public Health Officer, Dr Penny Borenstein to speak with you and take your questions. Before we begin, I'd like to personally thank my colleague, Frank Warren, for filling in for me at these briefings over the weekend so I could spend some much needed time with my family. I'd also like to thank all the members of the media for being here, as well as the public who are tuning in, asking questions on social media, and providing feedback on how we can make these briefings more effective. We sincerely appreciate your constructive feedback. And now County Administrative Officer and Emergency Services Director, Wade Horton.

Wade Horton:

Thanks Michelle. Good afternoon. Wait. Horton County CAO and Emergency Services Director. Today represents the fourth day of Shelter at Home in our County and I know this order is having an incredible impact on all of our lives, but we are taking these extraordinary majors necessary to slow to disease spread in our County, and we're doing this because we can save lives. Although we do encourage people to get outside, social distancing must be adhered to for our plan to work. That means keeping your distance from other family units at the beach, hiking, and on bike trails. We are blessed to live in a beautiful County, and we are fortunate that we can enjoy being outdoors, but we have to social distance. For this reason, the Pismo Preserve will be closed until further notice. Social distancing was not being maintained, so this decision was made to protect public health. We do not want to close additional trails or beaches, but we will evaluate if needed. We as a community have to partner in slowing down the spread of this disease, and it will take good decisions and sacrifices from everybody.

Wade Horton:

We've been receiving calls with folks expressing concerns when they see nonessential businesses operating, and not adhering to the County Shelter at Home order. We will be setting up a separate hotline dedicated to these calls, and that hotline will be ready tomorrow and we'll go ahead and publish that number on ReadySLO.org, and I'll mention that number tomorrow's briefing. Today our County health inspectors are visiting permitted businesses to check in on compliance. Our goal is to achieve voluntary compliance, through working with the public and having dialogue such as what we're doing right now. Although violation of our order is a misdemeanor, we are focused on partnership to protect our community.

Wade Horton:

I know there are a lot of needs in our community right now, and we are working to meet them. One of those needs is blood donations. College and business blood drives have traditionally been a significant source of blood supply in our County. With college students returning home and Shelter at Home order in place, blood donations are down. Although blood transfusions are not needed to fight Covid-19, there is still a need to keep blood supplies adequate. Please consider giving blood. Our hospitals need your help. Giving blood is exempt from the Shelter at Home order, and Covid-19 does not pose any known risks to donors during the donation process. Please consider scheduling an appointment today, by calling (877) 827-4376 again, that's (877) 827-4376. The donation center is located at 4119 Broad Street in San Luis Obispo. Again, that's 4119 Broad Street, SLO.

Wade Horton:

I want the public to know that we are working hard with [inaudible 00:04:57] and Dignity Health, evaluating health care system capacity. We are coordinating with President Armstrong and Cal Poly staff to assess their facilities, with the exception of dorms and residence halls, to locate an alternative care site in the event it is needed to help with potential overburdening of our health care system. I'd like to note that we are engaging the private sector to help with the evaluation and planning of this effort, and I appreciate their support and the offers to assist that are coming in every day. I'll now turn it over to Dr Penny Borenstein for the public health update.

Dr Penny B:

Thank you Wade, good afternoon. I'm Penny Borenstein, the County Health Officer for the County of San Luis Obispo. We have told you previously that we would only put all of the details of our cases online. We are here before you every day, so I will tell you what I know, when I know it for the day. So we are now at 33 cases. Two of them are hospitalized, one in our County still, and one outside of our County, but both are County residents. The good news is, we now can report that three of our cases have fully recovered, and everyone else is doing well at home.

Dr Penny B:

I want to remind folks, I've said it every day, but again, it's important to note that we do expect to see an increase in cases day over day, week over week, and perhaps month over month. People have been asking me, "When do we see turning the tide?" And that's a difficult question to answer. We've looked at other countries and their experience, but every situation is different, because it depends on the types of protective measures that have been taken, and when they've been started. We are hopeful in this community that the type of measures that we have taken with the Shelter at Home order, and the social distancing that we are continuing to recommend and enforce if necessary, will in fact turn the curve. But we don't know when that will be. My best estimate is that we are looking at a minimum of weeks before we hit the peak number of cases, and it may be even longer. With regard to testing, we are continuing to meet the demand for our public health lab, and I'm happy to report that we have gotten some of our newest test results from other private labs, so that tells me that not only the single lab that we were getting our positive results from is testing, but now some other private labs are now beginning to handle specimens from individuals in our County. So the lab capacity seems to be increasing.

Dr Penny B:

We are getting requests now from providers about their PPE needs, their protective equipment for infection control for themselves, and we are able to meet those at this time. For the most part. We are short on gowns, we are hopeful that we are getting some and we have communicated back to our providers that that is not a critical component of taking specimens. But again, healthcare providers who are looking for personal protective equipment or PPE, that don't have sufficient supplies in their offices, can either call us through the public health department line which will route right over to that phone assistance center, or they can go online through the ReadySLO.org, and find their way to the healthcare provider button, and push on that, and they will see a place that they can go right online to order supplies.

Dr Penny B:

With to the daycare situation, there are a large number of first responders who we need to make sure that their children are taken care of, so that they continue to work. So we've been working in concert

with the school system, with the EOC, and with a number of other providers who are looking to stand up, and are planning to do so this week. Childcare for essential workers. I've received a number of questions, "Well who is an essential worker?" And in this regard, we are right now looking to only provide this service to the people who are actually fighting the disease. I know that the availability of childcare is a big issue for many sectors of our community, but we are providing this only for the people right now who are emergency responders to the disease at hand. We have put a call out to invite people who are either teachers in the system, or otherwise do not have their regular jobs and may be available, to staff these childcare centers for these children of essential workers, and we're hoping that as many, especially those who are in the lower risk groups of young and healthy individuals, will make themselves available to serve that purpose.

Dr Penny B:

I do want to talk a little bit about the social distancing measures, and the transmission of this disease. I think you've been hearing, everyone now is an expert on six foot distancing. So why six feet? It is not a magic number. It is the average distance, if I can be graphic, that a cough or a sneeze generally goes in terms of the droplets. So that's why.

Dr Penny B:

That doesn't mean that someone passing through your six foot space is at risk of getting the disease unless you're actively coughing or sneezing on them at the moment that they do so. So we're asking for people to think about the infection control measures, and adhere to this six foot distancing, but also we're beginning to see a number of calls where, "Hey, I saw people on bicycles that were less than six feet apart." What I've been saying throughout this whole epidemic is, "We are invoking all of these stringent measures to bend the curve, to bring down the curve, to limit the spread. But we are not anticipating that every fleeting interaction between human beings is going to be a source of transmission." So I ask the public to just use reason in, in trying to engage and adhere to, as you heard Ms [inaudible 00:11:52] say, consistent social distancing, but we also want to balance that with not hearing every time there may be a mother and a small child taking a walk on the beach. So, I just want put that kind of messaging out about what social distancing means, what our best efforts are, but to ask for the population at large to think about what the conditions are for adhering to that. And in some cases what they are not.

Dr Penny B:

So for instance, we're getting requests about "Shouldn't we do away with people being able to bring their canvas bags into grocery stores because might that not be a source of transmission?" My answer is: I can't say to you with a straight eyes and an honest heart that there is no chance whatsoever that that couldn't be a source of transmission. But what I can say is that is an extremely low likelihood situation. And so that is just one type of example. Or, I'm playing a game of tennis with my best friend and we're on opposite sides of the net. So we're doing social distancing, but what about the tennis ball that I've just hit that now my partner goes and picks up, and sends back to me for that fleeting second that they're holding it in their hands. That is not a dominant nor effective means of communicability of this disease.

Dr Penny B:

So I give you those examples so that we as a society can continue to find the balance between doing the right things, adhering to the measures that we've put in place, but also continue to have some measure

of life while we are going through this together. As a public health officer, I ask for people to continue to get exercise, I ask for people to continue to get outdoors, to continue to get the groceries that they need at the grocery store, to go and get the gas that they need to go to places, and to do as much as is possible with respect to wiping down surfaces and keeping your distance, but we also have to understand that we cannot eliminate all interaction or 100% possibility of a single germ living on a tennis ball or on a canvas bag. So with that, I totally understand that people are scared, but I offer these kinds of examples as a way to ratchet down just a small bit the amount of panic that people have with respect to continuing to live our lives. And with that, I'm going to turn it over for questions.

Speaker 5:

Dr Borenstein, I noticed there's a positive case, another one at the age of zero to 18, is there any information you can provide with that individual?

Dr Penny B:

I don't have that information at this time.

Speaker 5:

Okay. And then also in regards to the daycare, how is social distancing observed with that type of situation?

Dr Penny B:

Right. No, that's a very good question. And it goes to the point I'm trying to make that we are going to do our absolute best within the framework of our best response to this outbreak, this pandemic. But we can't empty our hospitals of healthcare workers because they have to be home for childcare. So the better part of valor is providing childcare in situations that can allow our most important emergency responders to continue to do the job that they need to do in taking care of the patients with this disease. That said within a setting of childcare for their children, we are going to do our absolute best to monitor that those children remain disease free, to keep them as well separated as we can, especially for the staff who are at a higher risk potentially, because of their age or condition which is why I asked that especially younger and healthier individuals populate the staff of those centers, but we are not in a position to both respond to this disease effectively and avoid 100% opportunity for transmission of disease. Thanks.

Michelle Shoresman:

Other questions?

Speaker 6:

Oh, I have a question. Are you able to tell us how many tests the private labs have administered?

Dr Penny B:

We've been working on getting an update to that number but we have been unable thus far.

Speaker 6:

And then another question, is there communication between the County, so a student from Cal Poly were to go to the Bay area and test positive for Covid-19, would we get that information here in SLO?

Dr Penny B:

Yes. Counties share information amongst ourselves as to where the resident County is.

Speaker 6:

And then have there been any citations issued for people not complying with the Shelter at Home?

Dr Penny B:

Not to my knowledge.

Wade Horton:

Not yet.

Speaker 6:

And then also would you be able to give a little bit more information on, would the Cal Poly dorms be used for any type of hospitalization? Is there any update with that you want to address?

Wade Horton:

As I mentioned, we are working with president Armstrong and his staff to assess the site, but no dorms will not be used for a part of the alternative care site response. Dorms will not be used.

Speaker 7:

Have the formal Intel sites been identified yet? That will possibly house the homeless?

Wade Horton:

Yeah, so we have a hotel in Atascadero, with 27 rooms. We have a hotel Morro Bay with 45 rooms. We have a hotel in Pismo Beach for 22 rooms and then a hotel in SLO with 61 rooms

Speaker 8:

[inaudible 00:17:58] delivered, I checked on Friday?

Wade Horton:

Yeah, they were delivered Monday morning.

Speaker 8:

This morning?

Wade Horton:

Yeah. Today's Monday. Yes, that's right.

Speaker 9:

Also Wade, with the closing of the Pismo Preserve, you said there could be potentially other closures, are there other spots that you'd flag right now as potential candidates?

Wade Horton:

Not right now. I had a very good conversation with the Land Conservancy last night regarding Pismo Reserve, and it was a very difficult decision. However, as Dr Borenstein mentions, we do want to get people outside. We do want family units to be together and to be able to enjoy outdoors, but in this specific case, that parking lot and the restroom area, there are folks that just weren't minding that social distancing requirement, so we had to make that decision to protect public health.

Speaker 5:

Does the 18,000 students that come back to move out of the dorms concern you or anyone else? That they went to Seattle, they went to their back to their communities. Are they asked not to come back and move out? Or housing? [inaudible 00:19:09]

Wade Horton:

So, the question is, the Cal Poly kids that moved out, what happens when they come back? My understanding from Cal Poly is that they're going to be moving forward with distance learning, so that's not something that we're looking at as a high risk at this point, but we can evaluate that in the future if needed.

Michelle Shoresman:

Any additional questions?

Wade Horton:

Thank you.

Michelle Shoresman:

Thank you again to all of you for coming today and for the public for tuning in at home. Just a few reminders again to close. All of our case statistics, media releases, guidance documents, fact sheets are all being uploaded pretty much real-time on ReadySLO.org we also still maintain the phone assistance center line. That's where you can talk to a live person if you have questions about any of the information that you've heard or seen. That number is (805) 543-2444, and that's open 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM, seven days a week. We also have the public health information line, that is a recorded line that's available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and that number is (805) 788-2903.

Michelle Shoresman:

Lastly, and most importantly, starting tomorrow and through the rest of this week, viewers can tune in live on the San Luis Obispo County Public Health Department Facebook feed, to these media briefings at 3:15 PM. It's also being streamed live on KCOY and KSBY websites. Thank you and just remember that, from this point until the end of the week, we'll be doing these briefings at 3:15 instead of 3:30. Thank you and have a great afternoon.