

- Good afternoon, today is Wednesday, May 27th, 2020. My name is Michelle Shoresman. Thank you for watching today's San Luis Obispo County COVID-19 media briefing. This afternoon, we have two speakers for you. We will begin today with SLO County Agricultural Commissioner Sealer, Marty Settevendemie. We will conclude with County Health Officer Dr. Penny Borenstein. County Administrative Officer and Emergency Services Director Wade Horton is also here to take your questions. Thank you again to our American Sign Language interpreter, Shelly Lawrence, and now, SLO County Agricultural Commissioner Marty Settevendemie.

- Well, thank you and good afternoon, and today I'm gonna give a quick update from the Department of Agriculture, Weights, and Measures. For those of you who don't know the Department of Agriculture, Weights, and Measures is the main entity within our working to protect agriculture, ensure safety in the agricultural food supply, and to ensure equity in the marketplace. In addition to our regular services the department provides, we have also taken extra measures to protect the safety of Ag businesses and workers during this pandemic. In the collaboration with the California Department of Pesticide Regulation, the department of, the California Department of Food and Ag, and the State Department of Public Health, we have obtained approximately 54,000 surgical masks that we are making available to growers and farm workers. There's no charge for these masks, and we will distribute them on an as needed basis, until those supplies are exhausted. Please contact Tom Morgan, Deputy Agricultural Commissioner Sealer at 805-781-5910 if you would like to obtain these masks for your field workers and field crews. Please note that this PPE is not a substitute for the PPE required for pesticide handling or pesticide applications. In addition to this PPE, we are currently conducting further outreach to the farming and ranching community to provide detailed information on where field workers can be tested for COVID-19, the locations of such testing, hours of operation, and resources for assistance. Thank you to all the agricultural producers and workers who have kept our food supply available and safe during this crisis. Your dedication to the community is commendable, and we are here to serve you in any way as we can, and with that, I'll turn it over to Dr. Borenstein.

- Thank you, good afternoon. So for our daily case count, we are at 266. That includes still three individuals in the hospital, two in intensive care, and 89% of them recovered. So I want to also talk today about two sectors that as you may know have been opened, one of them on a statewide basis, that is places of worship, and the other I'll talk about is at this time for those counties that have tested to move more quickly through the state stage two, and that's hair salons and barbershops. So with respect to the places of worship, now what is allowed is in, in houses of worship, in person services for either up to 100 persons, or 25% of the usual capacity of that congregation, whichever is lower. The idea of that is continuing to try to spread people out. So physical distancing is expected as part of the reopening of our houses of worship, as is sanitation measures, the availability of hand sanitizer, as well as temperature screening. That can be done either at home, and self-reported, or at the place of worship. These are all in the state's guidance that is now available both on the state's website as well as all the guidance that we have on [readyslo.org](https://readyslo.org) to provide information on how our houses of worship can ready themselves for opening. In addition to all of those preparation measures, and numeric measures, there's some other thoughts about how houses of worship can move forward, so things like having a reservation system, or scheduling additional times for services to meet, so that they can have lower numbers at any one

particular service. Still, worship services are, especially for vulnerable, should be considered to be held online. Drive-through is still an option, but the in person service for those congregations that are interested in moving forward, and ready to do so with all of these protective measures in place may now do so. Just a couple of other items on that is that the religious services and childcare as part of holding services, or Sunday school, are at this time still not permitted. One more item also as a word of caution. As a singer, I know how much especially during worship services, many consider that a part and parcel of the service, but as I have spoken before about the enhanced risks of singing because of droplet spread, if you could do so with masks on, or better yet, if you can avoid or limit that altogether, and continue to have people spread out. Also, recitations out loud, to the extent that those could be limited are some other protective measures that our congregations may want to consider as they move forward. So that is the information with respect to places of worship. As I said, there is full guidance. I think it's something like 13 pages from the state that gives lots of good ideas and strong recommendations in moving forward. The other sector that is now open for business with plans in place, so I know that probably some were standing at the ready with their checklists to give to their employees, are haircutting salons and barbershops. But we still are asking that when they do move forward that they have all of those same precautions in place and that they have gone through a detailed plan that includes training of their staff, it includes all the sanitation measures, it includes mandated face coverings for both the haircutter and the patron who is getting their hair cut during the entirety of the service. What isn't included, because it's not conducive to having that face covering and up close and personal extended time frame for the service are things where the face is involved, so eyebrow weaving, eyelash services, shaving, facials, those types of services at this time are still not permitted. Also, in addition, some institutions have side by side nail service with haircutting service. At this time, this is only to allow people to get their hair cut, and does not include massage, nails, or spa services. So that's what we have to say today about those particular sectors moving forward. I just wanna remind folks again, we ask on behalf of vulnerable people that the mask recommendation be adhered to when physical distancing cannot be adhered to, and for those people in particularly high risk groups by virtue of age or medical condition, that they continue to consider stay-at-home if that's the safest way, especially we know that not everybody in close circumstances, shopping, in other locations where people are beginning to congregate, we're asking of everyone that they do wear a mask in those situations and vulnerable people, if they feel like they cannot put themselves into those situations, we're asking that services continue to be made available, such as online worship services, maybe even home haircuts, or stay-at-home, and get friends, and neighbors, and loved ones to support you. Our vigilance, obviously, thus far has yielded us in a very good situation. We wanna keep it that way, and we want to especially continue to protect our most vulnerable, so that we don't see increased case rates, but more importantly, increased hospitalization rates, and increased rates of critical care. So again, who I'm talking to with respect to this group is individuals over the age of 70, of 65, sorry. People living in nursing homes are particularly vulnerable or other long-term care facilities, immunocompromised individuals, people with lung conditions, heart conditions, kidney disease, people on dialysis, diabetes, liver disease, and those with obesity. One last thing I wanna address today is regarding our short term lodging order, which went into effect on May 17th. We're beginning to now get composite results of how that is playing out, real time, in our lodging facilities. Over the weekend, we conducted an audit. We are in the process of developing our responses, are pulling together all of the information that we have on that, but from what we've been able to see thus far, we've seen really good compliance. We've seen that the businesses from whom we've heard and from those we've been able to review thus far that we haven't

seen anyone not complying with the order. And so, we once again want to thank the lodging industry who have worked really well with the county during these very difficult times. We said that we would review on an every 14 day basis, and so that is actually coming up this weekend on May 31st. So we will be looking at the outcomes of our lodging and our case counts vis-a-vis our attempt to keep case counts low by virtue of keeping the tourists at bay at this moment in time. So we'll be revisiting that in the coming week and keep you up to date with that information. And that really is all that I have to share today. So with that, I will turn it over for questions.

- Dr. Borenstein?

- Yes?

- [Man] So staying with the tourism angle, despite that lodging restrictions, and we did see a lot of tourists in our area, particularly along the shoreline, what did the, you guys at the county see, any concerns or, you know, anything that stood out to you in terms of the numbers of people that came in?

- We did see an awful lot of people, and given that we think that the hotel industry is keeping the numbers down, that we believe that it's probably a lot of people who are coming for the day. We continue to ask that people abide by the state order that is in place, which no leisure travel at this time. I think we're not, we don't have our blinders on. We know that there are a fair number of people that are coming to our county for leisure travel. Many of them are coming for the day. We continue to ask that they put off that kind of travel for now. We know Memorial Day weekend was a really heightened weekend for visitation, and maybe it will go back down. We'll continue to look at it. We ask that when people do come to our county, if they are, that they abide by all that we are asking of them, which is continue to take into account all of the mitigation measures that we wanna see. Please, please, please don't be here if you are sick. Make sure that you're distancing from other individuals. Make sure that you are wearing a mask if you can't keep your distance from other people, especially indoors that's important, and we'll continue to monitor our case rates, and hope that we don't see an uptick because of that type of travel.

- [Man] And then also you mentioned last week, or a few days ago about testing for county employees and of course as drove in here to the information center today, a couple hundred years from where we're at right now, again, there's some testing of county employees. What can you tell us about that? Who's getting tested, number of tests, et cetera?

- Yeah, so I know I myself went and got tested for the first time. I don't have symptoms, thankfully, but I wanted to actually walk through the experience that many of our residents are through our testing facilities. I know that many of us at the emergency operation center did so. Halfway through the first

day, we were at about 50. So that's about the right number. We'll be here all week. We've made it available to county employees, to emergency operations center, to the jail, to Cuesta College, the County Office of Education, CMC we're continuing to test. So people basically along this Route 1 corridor is primarily who we're making it available to this week, and we'll know more about any results probably not 'til next week, because we're sending these out to an external lab, and the turnaround time is days, not 24 hours.

- [Man] And you also said the second round of testing at the California Men's Colony was taking place last week. Was there any--

- Yeah.

- Update on that?

- We have had no additional positives, thankfully, from the California Men's Colony, from our repeat testing. We did have one staff person actually in a different unit that has tested positive. We've begun a new investigation on that, and so we're doing testing all around that individual in terms of what inmates on the unit that they were on as well as their staff. And thus far, we're seeing negative results there as well.

- [Man] And will testing there kind of continue on after this round of testing is complete, or the plans moving forward there?

- Yeah, we do not have at this moment in time plans for periodic, routine testing for CMC, but as you know, when we see any single case, we jump on it very aggressively to do containment testing for anyone that that person may have been in contact with.

- [Man] In terms of the, now that churches are opening and some businesses, I think I've had some questions in regards to how safe it is for family members or friends to gather. What's your guidance on that? How safe is it at this point?

- So the state continues to have a very restrictive approach to this, which is no gatherings. We in this county have said, recognizing that people in their personal lives are gonna do what they're going to do, and we'd much prefer that they use good common sense, and guidance from us, so based on what we think is reasonable, we have said to private gatherings of people in their homes, please limit it to 10,

please limit it to people that you're routinely in contact with, and don't be, you know, moving all about with, you know, who you're congregating with, and to keep those numbers really small at this time. All of this, every single reopening or consideration of a new sector to get back to some sort of business as normal is to be done in a stepwise fashion, so that we can wait a couple of weeks in between each one and see what it, what we reap in terms of disease numbers. So at this time, we're asking that the public, if they are going to get together in private homes, or parks, even better, that they do so in numbers less than 10.

- [Man] And I know some cities have wrestled with policy around this, but there was that incident between somebody who was in a store without a mask, and a clerk, and I know that's happened around the country. What's your advice on stores trying to enforce mask policies? It's a tricky one.

- Yeah, so individual businesses can and should do what they think is appropriate for their business to protect both their patrons and their employees. Remember, mask usage, as it's more and more becoming evident through medical literature, really is about protecting other people. It is not fail-safe, which is why we continue to harp on all the other tried and true measures, especially hand washing and especially keeping your distance and staying home when you're sick. I know, you know, you're nodding, you've heard this a few times. You know, those really are the best methods. I get asked all the time, "why is this county "not going forward with an order for masks?" And the main reason is our numbers don't dictate at this moment that we need to dictate that to people. We reserve that for a situation if we seem to be going in the wrong direction with our disease spread, but right now, we continue to have very low numbers. That can change in a heartbeat, and thus, the utilization of masks as an additional protective measure is something that we should all do when necessary, when you cannot maintain the other measures, and particularly social distancing, or physical distancing.

- [Man] And there was mention of the barbershops, so the patron as well as the person cutting their hair should have masks on. If someone walks in without a mask, should the shop provide them with one, or what's your advice on that?

- Yes, I believe, you know, most of the salons are looking at doing just that. We've already gotten requests. We're trying to help the salons identify ways in which they can procure masks for just that reason, and that's a perfect example of a situation where you cannot maintain six foot distancing. You can't cut someone's hair from, I'm sure people have tried, but you know, so thus, that is the absolute right situation to be wearing face coverings.

- All right.

- Thank you.

- Thank you all again for coming today and tuning in online and on TV. A few notes and reminders this week. Our COVID-19 testing sites remain available at Grover Beach, Ramona Gardens Community Center, and Paso Robles Veterans Hall from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., throughout this week and next week, Monday through Friday. Our last day of testing at the Paso Robles Veterans Hall will be Friday, June 5th. At that point, that testing location will be moving to the City of San Luis Obispo. In the meantime, please go to [readyslo.org](https://readyslo.org) and make an appointment for the Paso Robles Veterans Hall site. Next week, we will begin offering new additional testing sites on the coast. Testing will be available at the Cambria Veterans' Memorial Building on Monday and Tuesday June 1st and 2nd, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Then we will move that site to the Red Barn in Los Osos on Wednesday and Thursday, June 3rd and 4th, again, from 9:00 to 4:00. Links to register for appointments at all of these testing sites are located on [readyslo.org](https://readyslo.org) under Testing Locations. One is not required to have symptoms for COVID-19 to make an appointment to test. Remember that all our county's information about COVID-19 is available at [readyslo.org](https://readyslo.org) in both English and Spanish, and thank you again for tuning in today. You can find these briefings live on SLO County Public Health's Facebook page, on our county's homepage, and on the livestreams of KCOY and KSBY. Briefings are also rebroadcast on public access channel 21 at midnight, 8:00 a.m., and 5:00 p.m., until the next briefing occurs. Thank you for staying engaged. Be safe, be kind, and we will see you here on Friday.