

- Good afternoon. Today is Monday, June 1st, 2020. My name is Michelle Shoresman and thank you for watching San Luis Obispo County's COVID-19 media briefing. This afternoon, we have three speakers for you. We will begin today with San Luis Obispo County Sheriff, Ian Parkinson. He will be followed by San Luis Obispo County District 4 supervisor and board chair Lynn Compton. And we will conclude with county health officer Dr. Penny Borenstein, county administrative officer and emergency services director, Wade Horton is also here and available to take your questions. Thank you again to our American sign language interpreter, Shelley Lawrence. And now San Luis Obispo County Sheriff Ian Parkinson.

- Well, good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to speak today and to update the community. Even though the topic that I am discussing is not directly related to COVID. It could have a direct effect on COVID cases and the safety of our citizens. I'm going to briefly discuss the tragic events that occurred in Minnesota. Like many of you, The only information I have received on this matter has been through the media reports. I've watched the video of the officers restraining George Floyd and I was shocked, saddened, and angered over what I saw. The officers involved deserve to be prosecuted for their actions or their lack of actions for Mr. Floyd's death. I have spoken to the chiefs of police and of local departments and other law enforcement executives in the county and they all share my same opinion on this matter. We've seen people from across the county take to the streets to protest what happened in Minneapolis. It is their right to do so under the first amendment of our constitution. Unfortunately, some of the people in these crowds have turned some peaceful marches into the opportunity to engage in acts of violence, theft, and property damage. For the business community throughout the state that is trying to recover from the economic damage of COVID, this could not have come at a worst time. We cannot ignore or tolerate racism in our community. We must denounce it when we see it and we must do everything we can to prevent it from occurring. Your local law enforcement is committed to promote unity in our community through dialogue and consensus building. We cannot afford to have our community be driven or divided through frustration, anger, or hate. I support the community's right to exercise their first amendment rights to protest and express their concerns in a nonviolent, nondestructive manner. Locally, we have had several gatherings that have occurred throughout the county that have given people the opportunity to express their concern and outrage of what has occurred in Minnesota. Our local gatherings have been peaceful and the organizers have been cooperative with law enforcement in keeping our community safe. I expect further

gatherings, protests, and marches to remain peaceful because the people attending them are our friends, our neighbors, and our family members. But to be clear, I will not stand by and allow anyone to take advantage of a peaceful march and turn it into an opportunity to hurt people or to damage property. Our role is to keep the peace by protecting all people and their property while safeguarding their constitutional rights. And that is what we will do. 44 deputies and nine local police officers have just returned from deployment to the city of Los Angeles. Those police officers and deputy sheriffs responded in a community that was not theirs, and with the sole purpose of helping keep the peace and protect people and property. I am glad that they have returned safely from Los Angeles and they're back in our community now. The deployment of police officers from San Luis Obispo County was done as a part of a state mutual aid request made by the state of California office of emergency services. This is standard practice for us to respond to our neighboring counties or throughout the state. I do not know at this time if the request to send additional officers throughout the state will occur, but I assure the residents of our county that we'll only do so after we are ensuring that our residents are safe. Thank you, I'd like to turn it over to Supervisor Compton.

- Good afternoon and thank you, Sheriff Parkinson. I know people are anxious, frustrated, and angry over the recent events going on across the nation. We are grateful for the safe return of the 44 sheriff deputies and nine local police officers sent to assist Los Angeles police to restore law and order in their communities. These officers are husbands, wives, parents, and members of our local community and we're very glad they're home safely. Though not nearly as devastating as it has been in neighboring communities, COVID-19 has made its way into our community. Our response to this pandemic has been impressive in part because our community has acted thoughtfully. I'm proud of the way our community responds to these challenges together. I'm asking our residents to continue to respect each other and their differences. If you protest, remember we are in the middle of a pandemic. Please keep a safe six feet or more of distance from each other and wear a face mask covering to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Now, a little bit about our new testing sites. We're pleased to announce new testing sites for COVID-19. One will be in Atascadero for two days, June 10th and June 11th, at the parking lot of the El Camino Homeless Organization, ECHO, and another one will be in Nipomo. We'll have more information on the one in Nipomo in the next week or so. More testing sites are available in several locations throughout the county, and testing sites move. So check often by visiting emergencyslo.org/testing. Or call us at

805-543-2444 to find a location near you. Remember, it won't cost you anything to get tested at any of these sites. They'll take your insurance if you have it, but there's no copay. And it's still free even if you don't have insurance. Now I'd like to recognize the workers at these testing sites. It takes resources and dedicated individuals to support multiple testing sites throughout the county. I want to thank the many healthcare providers and other workers for stepping up to support our pop-up testing sites throughout this county. These workers include public health nurses as well as medical reserve, poor volunteers, County disaster service workers and local EMS personnel. A little bit about renters and the potential for eviction. While our local emergency order to suspend evictions expired yesterday, local renters who are financially impacted by COVID-19 are still protected under the state's rules on evictions. The state judicial council's rule on eviction will remain in effect for at least 90 days after the governor lifts THE state of emergency order. The state of emergency order has not yet been lifted and there's no indication if that will be lifted anytime soon. What this means is that while landlords can now serve eviction notices, evictions are not enforceable in court for renters who are financially impacted by COVID-19. Therefore, those who have suffered financial hardships as a result of COVID-19 can not be evicted. The best course of action is for landlords and tenants to communicate with each other at the first sign of financial difficulties and to agree upon a realistic plan. It's always better if two parties can work together amongst themselves without other involvement. Thank you all for continuing to do your part to protect our community from the spread of COVID-19. And now I will pass the microphone on to Dr. Penny Borenstein.

- Thank you, good afternoon. So first I want to tell you that we now are going to only be updating our website and reporting new cases on weekdays, Monday to Friday. So this past weekend did not see an increase on the website. But today we can report over that weekend we only had two new cases reported. So we now are at 271 cases. 93% of them, 253, yes, have recovered. Five individuals are in the hospital, and three of them in intensive care. So that is what the disease looks like today in our county. I want to echo the sentiments that you heard from both our Sheriff and our Board Chair Supervisor, Compton. These are very challenging times. I know I have stood at this microphone many times and asked of our community for patience, for working together to bringing your best selves forward in these very difficult times. I continued to do so today. I would be remiss to not say anything about the additional anguish that is being experienced in our community. And I want to continue to ask of our community that we bring our best selves to all of the

fights that stand before us, especially the pandemic, which is still absolutely here. So I'd like to ask of everyone to get past the divides, be it black, white, be it red, blue, be it mask wearers and non-wearers, impoverished versus wealthy, housed versus unhoused. We are all in this community together. We are an amazing, caring, committed bunch of individuals who live side by side. And I just want to continue to ask of you that as we work through the pandemic and as we work through the additional challenges that we're faced with in light of Minnesota, that we continue to work as one society and one community so that we can all be safe and healthy as we move forward. I'm going to now talk about a couple of areas that I know have been stressful for our community. Those sectors that are not yet open for business. And I want to provide some clarification. So I think in recent days, coming out of the governor's press conference, there's been a lot of questions that have come to us, whether we're in stage two or early stage three or what is going on with that. So let me try to clarify or let me clarify. So we have successfully in this county tested and moved into and through opening all of stage two sectors. In addition to that, the state of California through their guidance, and posting that guidance has available to our county two areas that were initially in stage three. Those are houses of worship and hair salons and barbershops. With that, however, that does not mean that stage three is open. So there are quite a few sectors in stage three that are still not permitted at this time. And those are nail salons, massage therapy, body art, gyms, community pools, including private and public pools, and a number of other areas. So to be clear, how we move forward into those additional sectors is dependent on a couple of things. First, one of those sectors will only move forward when the state provides guidance and posts it on their website and makes it available to the industry. Secondly, it is the job of the local health officer to confirm that our county is ready to move forward without additional opening of a sector. I have done so with every permissive and posted guidance of all of the sectors to date. And if and only if we continue to see the good results that we are seeing, we will continue to move down that path just as quickly as we can with the state's approval of opening a sector by way of posting that guidance. So again, the types of things that we continue to look at, we look at it every day and we will continue to do so as we open more sectors, are the number of cases, where they're coming from, new chains of transmission, our numbers of hospitalizations, and how quickly our case numbers are rising. So right now we continue to be in a good point. And we hope that that will stay so and that we can continue to drive forward in opening all the additional sectors in stage three. In

stage four, large gatherings. And gatherings of any size actually at this point are not permitted under the state's guidance. I have spoken previously about our allowance for private, I'm sorry, private get togethers in small numbers if individuals want to come together, a handful of people or under 10. We have made that allowance, but that is for private get togethers. We know it is happening anyway. No one is coming to individual homes to determine if someone is a member of the family. But we are very much still asking that people do not come together in large numbers in any way. We know that it's happening now, on the streets of our county and as Supervisor Compton asked and the sheriff also said, we want people to, if they are moving forward with protests, to do so in a safe manner. Mass wearing is one of those measures. But all manner of other types of gatherings that I get asked on a regular basis, will I be able to have my wedding in July, will I be able to have that event that we plan for September? These are issues that unfortunately the decisions are left to the event planner. I don't have any particular insight as to when or how the state is going to open up in terms of size of gathering or timing of moving forward in terms of gatherings. So at this time, gatherings really of any type in the public domain are not allowed. When they do open, and I imagine that will happen at some point, at some number of people, we still will be looking at it in locally and in terms of what our measures look like on the ground locally. So just because something looks really good today and we've continued to see very low numbers, that can change in a heartbeat. And so with every decision, we will be looking at it based on what our metrics look like in this county as we move forward. In the meantime, all of those sectors in stage three and those who might be planning gatherings of some type in the future should continue to look at all the detailed guidance that is available. And let me just again remind people of some of the things, particularly around gatherings, that we would recommend. So guests and staff, be screened for fever or symptoms before entering an event or an establishment. Guests and staff, be able to maintain six foot distancing at a minimum. Outdoors is better than indoors. Avoid inviting guests from out of the area and encourage guests to wear masks, especially when distancing can't be kept or when there's either singing or laughing or loud conversation all the ways in which droplet transmission can occur. And finally, I caution continuously for people who are in those higher risk groups that they think twice about engaging in those types of large group gatherings. Even at the time at which we may be able to see more people coming together. So with that I will open it up for questions and that's what we have.

- [Reporter] Dr. Borenstein, with the people gathering together for these protests, do you have any concerns about increased COVID transmission?

- I do have concerns. I would ask of our protestors that they continue to follow the measures that we have asked of everyone in terms of infection control. Wear a mask, if you can distance, distance by a minimum of six feet, they are outdoors, which is a benefit. But, yes, I am concerned that gatherings of any type, be it a protest or any other type is a potential cause of spread of disease.

- [Reporter] I might have a question regarding restaurants being able to open right now. Is there any kind of enforcement going on to make sure they're following state guidelines? Have you guys received any complaints about that? Obviously people are very excited to get to go back to these places. Do you have any concerns about that?

- Yeah, so restaurants are all permitted under the public health department, the environmental health services division. Our staff is getting back to their normal routines of going out and doing inspections. As they do so, they will note if the guidance is being followed and the self attestation is in place. They, again, as you've heard throughout this entire thing, we look for compliance rather than citing businesses. Thus far we've received a small number of phone calls of complaints. Our compliance line is still open. And so in addition to routine inspections, we will go out to businesses from once we get any kind of complaint about lack of compliance with the best guidance.

- [Reporter] Question for Sheriff Parkinson,

- Sir.

- [Reporter] Several weeks ago when you spoke here and you said that staffing had been increased, because of needing to be on patrol and extra deputies and other personnel, has that changed? And in light of what's happening here recently, are there additional staff deputies out on the street right now?

- Well, up to the point that we had to send 44 deputies down to Los Angeles, our staffing levels continue to be up and they will continue to be up whenever possible. The problem is, as you can imagine, when you send 44 deputies out of town, it really depletes your forces. When you have a smaller police departments that don't have the numbers to assist, we really have to hold back. So not only do we have to hold back in the number of people we put on patrol, but also a contingent if

something bad were to happen. Like last night in Santa Maria, for example, we got a call for mutual aid and had to send units down to assist them. So we always have to have people able to respond and yet leave the county protected. So it has affected those numbers. As these protests go on and we devote more services, countywide law enforcement to these protests. Yes, it depletes from our patrol force, and affects those numbers.

- [Reporter] You mentioned Santa Maria. I mean, there's concerns that something like that could happen here, obviously you never know. How do you prevent something like that from occurring?

- Well, hopefully, dialogue. To be honest, the events that have occurred in this county so far have been in San Louis City and in Paso Robles City. Both those operations are run by their perspective police chiefs. We've assisted in the areas that they wanted and needed. I think having contact with the people that are organizing and having a dialogue with kind of a general agreement of do's and don'ts. And primarily it's gonna be really regarding a couple areas, one is safety. You drove through Santa Rosa street a little while ago and you saw all the people in the roadway. Can be very unsafe for those pedestrians and very unsafe for the drivers as well. So safety is number one for everybody. Everybody has the right to protest. However, we want to make sure it's done in a safe manner so nobody's hurt. And secondarily, and equally important as you heard me say, vandalism, destruction of property, theft, and or assaulting people is extremely important. I think we're pretty fortunate because we live in a county that, hopefully, we will never see any of that, but we've seen it in the past in riots. And hopefully, we've matured past that point to understand that that's not a way of solving. So it's gonna come down to trying to reason, give people some freedom of movement and the right to exercise their first amendment right.

- Any questions? Thank you all for coming today and tuning in online and on TV. A few notes for today. Appointments are available for COVID-19 testing on our website at ReadySLO.org. There are a few appointments slots still left at the Cambria site for today and tomorrow with plenty of availability for the Los Osos site on Wednesday and Thursday. Appointment scheduling is also available for the site that supervisor Compton mentioned on June 10th and 11th in Atascadero on our website. If you do not have access to the internet, you are able to call the phone assistance center and they will help you make an appointment at 805-543-2444. The Paso Robles vets hall site remains available the rest of the week as does the

Grover Beach site. Those appointments can also be made online at ReadySLO.org or by calling 888-634-1123. We will not be holding a media briefing this Wednesday afternoon as normally scheduled. Instead we will return on Friday at 3:15 p.m. In the meantime, you can still get all our county's COVID-19 information on ReadySLO.org in both English and Spanish. And you can also call the phone assistance center or the public health information line. Thank you for tuning in and this looks like Dr. Borenstein would like to say something.

- I just wanted to clarify because I myself did this. I went online to register for an appointment time for these newest clinics. Cambria, Los Osos, Atascadero. It is actually a registration process. You won't get a specific appointment time, so please do go on that website to sign up. They will have your name, but as distinct from the past. So in Grover Beach site, you won't get a specific appointment time. So I didn't want people to be confused by that. But thank you, Michelle.

- Thank you for that clarification. You can go back and watch this media briefing on our San Luis Obispo County Facebook, public health Facebook page or on the county's website until our next briefing on Friday. You can also watch this on public access channel 21 at midnight, 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Thank you for staying engaged. Be safe. And we will see you here again on Friday at 3:15.