

Daily Pilot

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H.B. nursing home sees COVID-19 cases soar

The Huntington Valley Healthcare Center reports the number has risen to 96 amid broadened testing efforts by county officials.

BY JULIA SCLAFANI

A Huntington Beach skilled nursing facility saw its infection rate of COVID-19 soar as recent testing confirmed a surge in cases associated with the healthcare center after Orange County health officials implemented broader testing.

Following more testing on Wednesday, Huntington Valley Healthcare Center said it has identified 62 cases of coronavirus, including two deaths, among its approximately 100 residents and 34 cases among its healthcare staff of equal size. This is a significant leap from the 74 total cases reported by facility on Tuesday.

According to Huntington Valley, 16 residents and two members of the facility's healthcare staff have been hospitalized. All other infected staff members are self-isolating.

The remaining COVID-19 positive residents are in an isolated unit within the nursing home and treatment is being directed by county healthcare officials. Huntington Valley's healthcare staff working with COVID-19 patients have been segregated from staff interacting with the uninfected residents' population, a spokesperson for Huntington Valley said Friday.

The skilled nursing and rehabilitation facility on Newman Avenue learned Tuesday of its first fatality related to the coronavirus, a 79-year-old man who had been transferred to an area hospital to receive acute care had died overnight. A 77-year-old man who died Tuesday afternoon was the first to die at the nursing home, a spokesperson said.

Huntington Valley first took steps to lock down its facility on March 11, including strict restrictions on visits by healthcare workers only, locking doors to prevent anyone from entering the facility without a screening, curtailing communal activities among residents and increasing disinfection practices, Huntington Valley said.

"The unsolicited support and well wishes we've received from area hospitals, faith-based organizations and government entities have been nothing short of tremendous," Huntington Valley Healthcare Center administrator Sarah Bates said in a written statement. "We're so appreciative of these gestures."

Huntington and Newport beaches brace for more visitors during heat

Authorities will be monitoring those areas this weekend, while Laguna's city beaches remain closed. Officials advise people to stay home during the pandemic.

BY MATT SZABO

The first heat wave of 2020 brought more people to local beaches Friday, even as Californians are being asked to stay at home during the novel coronavirus pandemic.

Beaches in Newport Beach and Huntington Beach are open to visitors, while Laguna Beach's city beaches are still closed.

Most beaches in neighboring Los Angeles and San Diego counties remain closed.

Huntington Beach registered a high temperature of 82 degrees on Friday. The forecast high for Saturday is 80 degrees.

The beach area north of the pier was well-populated on Friday afternoon, if not crowded. The pier remains closed, along with beach parking lots, metered parking along Pacific Coast Highway and Huntington Harbour beaches, Mayor Lyn Semeta said.

"The crowds are not what you would typically see on a day like today, that's not during a pandemic," Huntington Beach Police Department spokeswoman Angie Bennett said. "The crowds are definitely lighter, but there are more people down at our beaches than have been in the last few months."



TOP: A bicyclist cruises as he walks his dog along the bike path on the north side of Huntington Beach Pier on Friday.

LEFT: Beachgoers play along the coast on the pier's north side.

Photos by Kevin Chang
Staff Photographer

Bennett said the Huntington Beach Police Department and the city's Marine Safety Division would each have extra patrols at the beach this weekend.

"Really, this isn't the time to come to the beach," she said. "We're asking people to stay in their own areas if they can, but the beach is open. It's not that we're not welcoming people, but there's nowhere to park, and we want to make sure that people are following the social distancing orders set forth by the state."

Sebastian Alcaraz of Long Beach, 17, prepared to surf at 11th Street on Friday afternoon, as he has continued to do during the pandemic. He said he was sick for about a week in January and lost his senses of taste

and smell. He now believes that he was infected with COVID-19.

Alcaraz's friend, Natalie Peart of Huntington Beach, 23, said she felt safe at the beach.

"We're in California; we're the most chill people," Peart said. "Everyone's social. Nobody wants to give that up, you know? ... People are going out because we've been quarantined for a month, and now it's hot. Nobody wants to be inside."

Popular Newport Beach surfing destination the Wedge remains closed, but people still flocked to the beach on Friday. Brett Polley of Irvine, 20, hung out with his

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Newport looking down \$13.5M revenue hole created by coronavirus

BY HILLARY DAVIS

Newport Beach is looking down a \$13.5-million revenue hole because of the sudden economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic, and that's just through June.

Sales tax revenue could drop as much as \$1.3 million, according to projections released this month by the city finance department. Bed taxes — from hotels and vacation home rentals, large slices of Newport's key hospitality industry pie — could plummet by \$5.4 million.

Revenue streams such as beachfront parking, classes at the recreation centers, gas taxes and permit reviews have also been dammed by nationwide stay-at-home orders to stem the spread of the virus.

Overall projected revenue losses for the remainder of the fiscal year, which ends June 30, could represent a 5.8% dip.

Local sales tax, driven by dispensable income and social gathering, draws mostly from auto sales, general retail and dining — and with a greater proportion of sit-down and fine dining and higher end shops, Newport is not in the same position to absorb sales tax losses as cities with more fast food and discount big-box stores like Walmart or Target, said Theresa Schweitzer, an accountant for the city.

"We don't know how all this is going to unfold except that most of our forecast is assuming that most of fiscal year 2021 will be impaired to some level."

— Dan Matusiewicz

Newport Beach finance director

The handful of hotels that remain open report occupancies of 2% to 10%, and vacation rentals went from weak to flat-lined when the City Council agreed earlier this month to suspend short-term rentals until mid-May.

City Finance Director Dan Matusiewicz said \$13.5 million is a conservative estimate, and the city can absorb it by tightening up on spending without having to dip into reserves.

A temporary hiring freeze across all departments except front-line public safety could save \$3 million alone, and City Manager Grace Leung said she doesn't think the city needs to furlough employees at this time.

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Raul Roa | Staff Photographer

ALSO FROM THE DAILY PILOT:

ORANGE COUNTY CORONAVIRUS TESTS AT A NEW HIGH

Known coronavirus cases now sit at 1,845 total infections, up 33 from Thursday. Testing, however, took a step up with 1,267 new tests given. PAGE A2

THE CROWD: 'HELP THEM HOME' EVENT RAISES MONEY FOR O.C.'S HOMELESS

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GRAD NITE AT DISNEYLAND CANCELED DUE TO CORONAVIRUS

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6 former Costa Mesa mayors demand the city reopen parks and golf courses

BY FAITH E. PINHO

In a scathing open letter addressed to the Costa Mesa City Council Friday, six former mayors demanded city leaders reopen parts of the economy, specifically citing the council's recent decisions in light of the coronavirus to close parks, golf courses and trails, and to place a moratorium on rental evictions for businesses.

The letter, signed by current Councilmembers Sandy Genis and Allan Mansoor, as well as James Rigeheimer, Gary Monahan, Steve Mensinger and Eric Bever, urged the city to follow the lead of the Orange County Board of Supervisors, which voted unanimously Tuesday to allow public and private golf courses to reopen.

"We are not calling for an end to common-sense practices aimed at guarding the public health. Indeed, we're calling for common sense — for our public officials to remember that they have the public's trust only insofar as they trust



GARY MONAHAN, far left; Steve Mensinger, second from right and then-Mayor Pro Tem Jim Rigeheimer, at right, gathered in 2012 to watch early returns in the council race. They want the city to reopen parts of the economy.

the public," the letter read. "In the past several days, some of Costa Mesa's public officials have revealed a contempt for the public. Failing to plan for a crisis, they responded with panic. They brought a sledgehammer to a problem that requires a scalpel."

The sextet of mostly conservative former mayors accuse the current council, comprised of a liberal-leaning majority, of "fail[ing] to understand" the ramifications of "crushing an economy." They

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