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JEFFERSON COUNTY UNIFIED COMMAND CENTER UPDATE FOR APRIL 28, 2020

Birmingham, AL – The Jefferson County Unified Command Center (JCUC) and its partner agencies continued to help provide information, goods and services to the people of Jefferson County throughout the COVID-19 pandemic response. Dr. Mark Wilson, Jefferson County Health Officer, and Jim Coker, Director of Jefferson County Emergency Management Agency serve as the co-leaders of the Unified Command Center.

State of Alabama Safer at Home Order to Go in Effect at 5:00 PM on April 30, 2020:

On April 28th, Governor Ivey announced the new health order that will go into effect on Thursday at 5:00 PM. This order relaxes a previous health order regarding individuals, employers, retailers, beaches and medical procedures. The order remains in effect until 5 p.m. on May 15. The order and fact sheets describing the “safer at home” order may be viewed at alabamapublichealth.gov.

Under the new health order, individuals are encouraged to exercise personal responsibility but are not ordered to stay home to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Public places are to take reasonable steps to avoid gatherings of 10 persons or more, maintain six feet of separation between persons, and disinfect frequently used items and surfaces.

All non-work related gatherings of 10 persons or more, or non-work related gatherings of any size that cannot maintain a consistent six-foot distance between persons from different households are prohibited. But “drive-in” gatherings of any size are permitted if the participants adhere to rules that include participants remaining in their vehicles for the entire event, all vehicle occupants must be from the same household, and people are not to come within six feet of participants in other vehicles. Non-work related gatherings include church services, weddings, funeral services, social gatherings, concerts, festivals, sporting and similar events.

Employers are also to maintain six feet of separation between persons as work duties permit, consistent with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Employers are to facilitate remote working arrangements where practicable, minimize employee travel, and otherwise follow guidance from the CDC concerning ways to reduce transmission among employees to maintain healthy business operations, and to maintain a healthy work environment. All retail stores may open with the following rules:

- Occupancy is limited to no more than 50 percent of normal occupancy as determined by the fire marshal. Staff is to be posted at entrances and exits for enforcement.
- Employees may not knowingly allow customers or patrons to congregate within 6 feet of one another.
- Retailers must comply with sanitation guidelines.

Effective with the new order, dental, medical or surgical procedures are allowed unless the State Health Officer or his designee determines that performing such procedures would unacceptably reduce access to personal protective equipment or other resources needed to diagnose and treat COVID-19.
“Our goal is to continue efforts to keep people safe and support the community as we enter this next phase under the new “Safer at Home” statewide order”, said Dr. Wilson. “Public Health partners are continuing to increase access to community testing, including access for people without health insurance or ability to pay”, Wilson added. The Jefferson County Department of Health (JCDH) is increasing its capacity to conduct the contact tracing that will be needed as more businesses and open up. JCDH’s Environmental Health team is also preparing to increase its ability to help assure that businesses are following guidelines to keep employees and customers safe.

We want EVERYONE to pay close attention to the Recommendations for Individuals:

- Minimize travel outside the home, especially if sick
- Wear a face covering when around people from other households
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or hand sanitizer, especially after touching frequently used items or surfaces
- Refrain from touching your face until your hands are washed or sanitized
- Cover your sneezes and coughs with a tissue, or the inside of your elbow
- Disinfect frequently used items and surfaces often

People who are more vulnerable to complications of COVID-19 should continue to be especially careful. This includes elderly individuals (over 65 years old); people with certain underlying health conditions, including high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma; and people on cancer chemotherapy or other treatments or conditions which weaken the immune system.

REMEMBER: COVID-19 can be spread by people who have no symptoms, so everyone should act as if they or others around them may be infected.

WE’RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER!

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