

*From the desk of Commissioner Robert S. Weinroth*

*March 25, 2020 COVID-19 Update*

***President Trump has declared Florida as a major disaster area due to the coronavirus pandemic which will provide federal assistance to supplement state, tribal and local recovery efforts beginning January 20, 2020 and continuing. This will be in addition to the benefits in the stimulus bill currently being negotiated between the US House of Representatives, US Senate and President Trump.***

***The county just announced all parks and golf courses (public and private) are closed effective immediately.***

***Currently, there are 118 cases and 3 deaths in Palm Beach County.***

***Below is important information on the COVID-19 pandemic. Please review carefully and keep in mind that information is changing quickly.***

***I am working with local officials to keep the public informed with up-to-date information that is also posted on my Facebook page.***

***We urge everyone to please follow the recommendations from local, state and federal officials. Stay home if possible. Stay away from large groups of people and limit group sizes to 10 or less.***

The elderly and those with underlying medical problems like high blood pressure, heart problems and diabetes are more likely to develop serious illness and officials recommend you shelter in place.

**If you're sick, stay at home & avoid crowds and call your doctor or healthcare provider.**

If you have returned from any international travel or a cruise within the last 14 days and you are sick, call your doctor, health care provider or county health department.

If you have recently traveled to the area from an area with substantial community spread including New York Tri-State area (NY, NY and CT) you are mandated by a state emergency order to shelter in place for 14 days.

*Violators could be fined \$500 and face 60 days in jail. Airline employees and those performing emergency health or military duties are exempt.*

**Testing is only available if you have COVID-19 symptoms** such as a fever, chills, shortness of breath and/or sore throat. Do not go to the emergency room since they may not have any testing kits.

**Call you doctor or health care provider.**

Drive through testing is only available by appointment and only if authorized through your health care provider and/or the Palm Beach County Health Dept. (see contact info below).

***Palm Beach County Health Department***

COVID-19 call center (24/7): 866-799-6121 or email: [COVID-19@flhealth.gov](mailto:COVID-19@flhealth.gov)

Baptist Health Care On Demand is available for online screening via their app: Baptist Health Care On Demand with code: Care19.

## ***County Closures/Reduced Hours***

Almost all county departments are still operating such as Engineering, Planning, Zoning and Building Departments, Palm Beach International Airport, Parks and Recreation, and the Solid Waste Authority, just to name a few. However, some departments have made adjustments to limit public contact (click [here](#) for more information).

- Palm Tran is operating on a Saturday (reduced) schedule and all fares have been waived
- Libraries are closed ([virtual library](#) is open)
- County parks are closed including beach parks
- Boat ramps and marinas are closed for recreational use including charters (does not include commercial)
- Golf courses are closed (private and public)
- Palm Beach County Office of Equal Opportunity closed to the public to prevent the spread of COVID-19
  - In response to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19), effective immediately, the Palm Beach County Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) office is closed for walk-in visits but is still conducting intake interviews and assisting individuals over the telephone. This action minimizes the health risks to

county employees and the public while ensuring that no individual loses their rights under the laws that we enforce. Preserving access to being able to file a charge of discrimination or complaint is important because the laws the OEO enforces have deadlines within which individuals must file discrimination charges or complaints. If you would like to begin the process of filing a charge or complaint of discrimination, you are encouraged to visit the OEO's website ([www.pbcgov.com/equalopportunity](http://www.pbcgov.com/equalopportunity)) to complete the applicable questionnaire. Additionally, you may also contact the OEO at (561) 355-4884 or (561) 355-1517 (TTY/TDD) to begin the process of filing a charge or complaint of discrimination or if you have a disability or you otherwise have difficulty with accessing the website.

## ***Other Closures***

- Restaurants/food establishments are closed – delivery and take out only
- All movie theatres, concert venues, auditoriums, playhouses, bowling alleys, arcades, gyms, and fitness studios are closed. *This does not include hotel fitness centers with a capacity of 10 persons or less, or are an amenity of a residential building.*
- Certain state and federal offices are closed to walk-in traffic – check websites for details

More information on closures is available  
at <http://discover.pbcgov.org/coronavirus/Pages/default.aspx>.

*If you live within with boundaries of a municipality such as [Boca Raton](#) and/or [Delray Beach](#), please check their websites and/or call for additional closures, etc*

## ***Job Loss Benefits/Job Seekers***

### **CareerSource Palm Beach County**

**Central Career Center**

561.340.1060

CareerSource Palm Beach County Offices are closed to the public but they have a dedicated team of career counselors, business coaches and training providers to help area businesses stay competitive through talent acquisition, and job seekers find new jobs through career assessments, training and employment assistance through online/email/phone service. If you have lost your job due to the #COVID19 crisis, file a claim through the Reemployment Assistance Program with the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity.

Learn more ----> <http://ow.ly/GAde50yUC1t>

### ***Important links and hotlines to other agencies:***

**Call 211** for mental health and community services such as food assistance, medical clinics, foreclosure prevention, parenting info on developmental concerns (Help Me Grow), special needs and senior services.

**Free meals for kids** during school closures: Call 211 or text FLKIDSMEALS to 211-211 for food distribution locations.

Click [here](#) for *Palm Beach County School Board Food Distribution sites and information.*



## *Small Businesses*

The Florida Small Business Emergency Bridge Loan Program is available to provide short-term, interest-free loans to small businesses that experienced economic injury from COVID-19. The application period is open now and runs through May 8, 2020. Interested businesses should visit [FloridaDisasterLoan.org](https://FloridaDisasterLoan.org) for more information.

The **U.S. Small Business Administration** is also offering low-interest federal disaster loans for working capital to small businesses suffering substantial economic injury.

The **Short Time Compensation Program, also known as Work Sharing**, allows employers to receive assistance with

retaining their employees. The program is administered by the **Florida Department of Economic Opportunity** and permits prorated reemployment assistance benefits to employees whose work hours and earnings are reduced — helping to avoid layoffs.

The Business Damage Assessment survey evaluates businesses affected by COVID-19 and the impacts the virus has had on the local economy so actions to implement appropriate relief programs can begin. All businesses that have been impacted should fill out the survey at <https://floridadisaster.biz/>.

**State of Florida loss of job/reemployment financial assistance:**

General info: 800.204.2418 or [www.floridajobs.org](http://www.floridajobs.org)

How to file a claim: 800.681.8102 or [www.floridajobs.org](http://www.floridajobs.org)

To Create a PIN: 800.297.0586

Expect long delays in handling phone calls due to the expected surge in the number of applicants.

**Services for Employers with CareerSource:** Our Business Services staff can connect your business with qualified candidates for your job openings – at no cost to you. Contact us at [www.careersourcepb.com](http://www.careersourcepb.com) or call 561.340.1060 and select option 3.

## ***Price Gouging***

Call the Florida Attorney General at 1-866-9-NO-SCAM (1-866-966-7226) to report an incident. During a state of



emergency it is illegal to charge unconscionable prices for goods or services following a declared state of emergency. If there is a large difference between the prior price and the current charge, it is considered price gouging.

## ***Scam Alert***

**Undelivered goods:** Online sellers claim they have in-demand products, like cleaning, household, and health and medical supplies. You place an order, but you never get your shipment [[consumer.ftc.gov](http://consumer.ftc.gov)].

**Door-to-door sales:** This scam is effective as people are self-isolating and working from home, thus more likely to answer the door. A person pretends to be from a company such as DirecTV or Comcast; that person comes to your door [[wctv.tv](http://wctv.tv)] and offers you a deal, but they tell you it won't last and request money upfront. After the scammers get your money, they deposit your check or cash, promise to bring a service or product back at a later date, and never return.

**Work at home:** Ads will appear saying you can earn big money at home [[consumer.ftc.gov](http://consumer.ftc.gov)] or offers help starting an online business, with a proven system to make money online. They'll ask you for money for training or exclusive access. But no job follows, and if you give them your driver's license and bank account numbers to sign up, they might steal your identity or your money.

**Checks from the government:** The government may soon send money [[consumer.ftc.gov](http://consumer.ftc.gov)] by check or direct deposit to assist

those who've experienced financial hardship as a result of this disaster, but the details are still unclear, and the amount has not yet been confirmed. These reports of checks aren't yet a reality [cnbc.com]. Anyone who tells you they can get you the money now is a scammer.

**What should consumers do?** Consumers should report scams to the **FDACS Division of Consumer Services** at 1-800-HELP-FLA (1-800-FL-AYUDA en Español), or online at FloridaConsumerHelp.com [floridaconsumerhelp.com].

## *Animal Care and Control*

Palm Beach County Animal Care and Control has implemented new protocols and limited services to the public in an attempt to keep pets and pet owners in the community safe and mitigate exposure. These new changes will go into effect Monday, March 23.

- All spay and neuter surgeries for the public, including TNVR (trap, neuter, vaccinate, return) will be put on hold for a minimum of two weeks.
- Appointments for owner surrendered animals will no longer be accepted until further notice. The shelter is asking pet owners to hold onto their pets or make other arrangements for the time being. (Exceptions will be made for emergency situations.)
- All volunteer orientations and acceptance of new volunteers will be put on hold.

Other services such as low-cost vaccinations, microchipping and pet adoptions are still available with no changes to hours of operations at this time.

With regards to keeping pets at home safe, there is no evidence that pets can contract or spread COVID-19. That being said, Animal Care and Control encourages pet owners to follow recommended health and hygiene guidelines and wash hands before and after handling pets. Preparing a disaster kit (similar to those used for hurricane season) and stocking up on pet food and essential supplies and medication for your pet is also recommended.

For additional information and updates, please visit [www.pbcgov.com/animal](http://www.pbcgov.com/animal) or call 561-233-1200. If you are sick or not feeling well, but need assistance with your pet, please refrain from entering the shelter and call 561-233-1200, extension 0 for assistance.

Palm Beach County Animal Care and Control is located at 7100 Belvedere Road, West Palm Beach, FL 33411. Business hours are Monday – Friday 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

## ***Blood Donors Needed***

**American Red Cross I South Florida Region**

Main: 561-650-9144 |

**Visit your local American Red Cross**

1250 North Point Parkway | West Palm Beach, FL 33407

2750 Kanner Highway | Stuart, FL 34995  
149 SE Avenue D | Belle Glade FL 33430  
[www.redcross.org/southflorida](http://www.redcross.org/southflorida) [[redcross.org](http://redcross.org)]

## ***Recommended Senior Shopping Hours***

*(subject to change – please check their websites or call to confirm)*

**Publix:** Tuesday & Wednesday from 7am to 8am

**Walmart:** Tuesday – first hour of business

**Winn Dixie:** Monday thru Friday from 8am to 9am

**Costco:** Tuesday & Thursday from 9am to 10am

**Dollar General:** daily – first hour of business

**Big Lots:** daily – first hour of business

**Whole Foods:** daily from 8am to 9 am

**Fresh Market:** Monday thru Friday from 8 -9 am