



**Washington County, North Carolina
Coronavirus COVID-19 Response
General Press Release #3
March 25, 2020 @ 4PM**

Previous press releases related to this matter are summarized below and are available online at:

<https://www.washconc.org/default.aspx> as well as the official Washington County Facebook Page at <https://www.facebook.com/Washconc/> which also serves as Washington County's primary social media and online public communications platform. Joining or having a Facebook account is not required to access info at that site.

- March 16, 2020: Press Release #1 Announcing General COVID-19 Guidance and Response Measures
- March 18, 2020: Press Release #2 Announcing Declaration of Local State of Emergency for Washington County

Washington County continues to remain in close and constant contact with local, state, and federal health care and emergency response officials as we prepare for the potential risks posed by the continuing escalation of the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) throughout North Carolina.

Although we have no knowledge of any pending or currently confirmed positive COVID-19 cases within Washington County, based on the recent confirmation by the NC Department of Health and Human Services that community spread of the virus is now occurring within North Carolina, as well as the quickly escalating numbers of confirmed cases in our region, we realistically anticipate such cases to likely begin arising in the near future.

In addition to encouraging our citizens to remain calm during this challenging time, and to educate themselves carefully about, and practice the latest guidelines available from applicable local, state, and federal health care authorities (links to which are provided at the end of this press release), in the interest of taking additional steps to help preserve public health, safety, and welfare, Washington County has determined it is necessary and advisable to take the following additional actions until further notice at this time:

1. Restricted Public Access to County Offices/Facilities:

- a. Effective Thursday, March 26, 2020 at 8:30AM most Washington County Offices and Facilities will be closed to the public with some limited exceptions.
- b. A detailed breakdown of individual departments, restrictions, and contact info is attached to this release and will be posted on our web page and Facebook page links to which can be found at the top of this release.
- c. Staff will continue to report to work on their regular schedules and will be available to serve the public via phone/email/and other electronic or restricted means where appropriate.

2. Temporary Suspension of Water System Cut-Offs for Failure to Pay Water Utility Bills:

- a. Routine cut-offs for failure to pay water utility bills will be temporarily suspended until April 30th, 2020.
- b. This is not a waiver or forgiveness of any customer's responsibility to pay for any and all water consumed at applicable rates established by the Washington County Utility System.
- c. Customers will remain responsible for any and all such payments notwithstanding any failure or decision by Washington County to not cut off any individual customer's water now, or in the future, for any reason.
- d. Therefore, customers are strongly encouraged to make every effort to continue paying their applicable water bills in full, to avoid any applicable fees, interest, sudden shut-offs, or undue hardships that may, result in the future from deferred payments and overdue balances.
- e. Additional details including applicable rules and restrictions will be forthcoming soon, published online, and may be sent to customers with their upcoming statements if feasibly possible.

ADDITIONAL LOCAL GUIDANCE:

1. **Individual/Community Mitigation Efforts:** Citizens are strongly encouraged to take reasonable measures to limit their potential exposure to COVID-19 by staying up to date with and following the latest official local, state, and federal guidance including without limitation: Social Distancing Practices; Avoiding unnecessary travel and social gatherings; Working from and/or sheltering/staying at home whenever possible.
 - If sick, **STAY HOME!** (for at least 72 hours after symptoms go away)
 - If needed, call your provider or the local health department. **CALL FIRST**, Do not come in.
 - Wash your hands **FREQUENTLY** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
 - Avoid close contact (less than 6 ft) with people who are ill.
 - Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and throw it away.
 - Clean and disinfect surfaces that are frequently touched.
2. **Workplace Protection:**
 - Employers should take necessary precautions as they see fit, to ensure the safety of their employees. This may include enforcing social distancing measure, teleworking, etc.
 - Encourage sick employees to stay home. For your business or organization, encourage staff to stay home which may require the alteration or review of leave policies.
 - Disinfect work surfaces, including equipment often following proper CDC guidance.
 - Pay special attention to common surfaces such as phones, door handles, radios, pens, steering wheels, gas pumps, etc.
 - Use technology for updates and information exchange instead of in-person meetings.
 - Limit visitors and family to workplace.
 - Early recognition of employees that are ill is important to protecting your entire staff.
3. **What to Expect in the future:** The mitigation efforts listed above remain the best way to slow the spread of the COVID-19. Municipal and County staff continue to coordinate with first responders, health care providers, and various other community stakeholders to insure an adequate response to the impacts of COVID-19.

The increasing number and frequency of announced cases close to our jurisdiction should serve as a reminder of the importance of practicing our mitigation efforts, and not simply a source for panic.

As cases continue to escalate, you will see a shift in focus from testing to treatment. Again, testing is a diagnostic step, not a cure or treatment of symptoms. There will be a significant increase in known cases over the

coming days. These increases are primarily contributed to widespread testing initiatives, as well as community outbreaks now in the larger metropolitan areas of New York and Washington.

Announcements of cases attributed to “community spread” will continue for the foreseeable future. This is a normal and expected progression of communicable disease pandemics such as COVID-19. However, frequent hand washing and continuing to practice social distancing is the best way to fight community spread.

Areas with high population densities such as Wake, Durham and Mecklenburg counties will continue to experience the greatest concentration of outbreaks, with their neighboring counties being the next highest. This is an expected trend and is now evident by reviewing the NCDHHS state map tracker.

<https://www.ncdhhs.gov/covid-19-case-count-nc>

4. **Economic Impacts and Mitigation:** The systemic effects of social distancing have and will continue to impact our local economy. Particularly our local restaurants, many of which continue to offer carryout / drive through options. Please continue to support these locations when possible during this difficult time.

There are also several conversations at the federal and state levels regarding economic initiative.

North Carolina is in the process of lifting many of the unemployment guidelines for those seeking assistance.

Details pertaining to this initiative will be forthcoming.

5. State COVID-19 Assistance Hotline: Dial 2-1-1 or 1-888-892-1162
 - a. Text COVIDNC to 898211 to sign up for updates

Washington County's top priority is and always will be the health, safety and security of our staff and the citizens and community we serve.

We are here to offer support and answer any questions or concerns you may have. We are encouraging all community partners to share accurate information and promote it within your businesses, communities, and elsewhere. Washington County’s website and Facebook page are great ways to stay up to date on accurate information.

Additional Information/Guidance:

COVID-19 Exposure and Symptoms

Know the Symptoms

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness with [symptoms](#) similar to the flu. Symptoms are typically mild to moderate, but there have been cases of severe illness and death due to the virus. The following symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure.

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

Limit Exposure

Coronaviruses like COVID-19 are most often [spread](#) through the air by coughing or sneezing, through close personal contact (including touching and shaking hands) or through touching your nose, mouth or eyes before washing your hands. NCDHHS recommends that persons experiencing fever and cough should stay at home and not go out until their symptoms have completely resolved.

The Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has [actions you can take](#) to prevent others from getting sick. This includes:

- Avoiding contact with others.
- Covering your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.
- Not traveling or going to school or work while sick.
- Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

Call your healthcare provider for medical advice if you have COVID-19 symptoms, such as cough, fever or difficulty breathing.

Before you go to the doctor's office, emergency room or urgent care, **call ahead** and tell them about your symptoms and if you've been exposed to COVID-19. Be sure to follow instructions from your [local health department](#) and health care provider on the appropriate precaution measures to help protect your community. This will allow them to take steps to keep other people from getting exposed.

DHHS has [guidance](#) for patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases who are being cared for at home and those who residing in a [congregate living facility](#), such as a dorm or barracks.

Steps to Take if You Are Sick

The CDC recommends the following steps if you are sick:

- Stay home except to get medical care.
- Separate yourself from other people in your home.
- Call ahead before visiting your doctor.
- Wear a facemask.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes.
- Clean your hands often.
- Avoid sharing personal household items.
- Clean all "high-touch" surfaces every day.
- Monitor your symptoms.

Visit the CDC website for more [details](#). View NCDHHS' [guidance](#) on what to do if you feel sick.

(See the attached 1 page flier from the NC DHHS referred to as “guidance” above which can also be found online at: <https://files.nc.gov/ncdhhs/documents/files/covid-19/C19-PatientGuidance-3.23.20-FINAL--003-.pdf>)

Know the Difference: Self-monitor, Quarantine and Isolation

These are protective measures used to prevent the spread of COVID-19 among people who may have been exposed.

- **Self-monitoring** is for those that may have been exposed to a person with COVID-19. They should monitor themselves for symptoms (fever, cough, and shortness of breath). Self-monitoring means people should monitor themselves for fever by taking their temperatures twice a day and remain alert for cough or difficulty breathing. If they develop symptoms during the self-monitoring period, they should self-isolate, limit contact with others, and seek medical advice by telephone.
- **Quarantine** is for people who were exposed to a person with a confirmed case of COVID-19 but are not experiencing symptoms. Contact your [local health department](#) or medical provider if you are unsure if you should self-quarantine.
- **Isolation** separates people who are sick from those who are well. People who have tested positive for COVID-19 in North Carolina are in isolation.

Testing

The CDC and NCDHHS have shifted their focus away from mass testing.

As such, current testing guidelines are as follows:

- Most people do not need a test. When you leave your home to get tested, you could expose yourself to COVID-19 if you do not already have it. If you do have COVID-19, you can give it to someone else, including people who are high risk.
- Your doctor can help you decide if you need a test. There is no treatment for COVID-19. For people with mild symptoms who don't need medical care, getting a test will not change what you or your doctor do.
- Testing is most important for people who are seriously ill, in the hospital, people in high-risk settings like nursing homes or long-term care facilities, and healthcare workers and other first responders who are caring for those with COVID-19.

Additional Resources:

1. Local Resources:

- a. MTW District Health Department <https://mtwdistricthealth.org/>
- b. Washington County Web Page <https://www.washconc.org/> (contains info on most services/departments)
- c. Washington County Facebook Page <https://www.facebook.com/Washconc/>
- d. Washington Regional Medical Center (Privately Owned & Operated)
https://www.facebook.com/pg/washingtonregionalmedicalcenter/posts/?ref=page_internal

2. State Resources/Guidance:

- a. NC Dept. of Health & Human Services: <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/>
- b. NC Governor Cooper's Executive Orders: <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/public-health/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-response-north-carolina/executive-orders>
- c. NC Dept of Commerce/Unemployment Insurance: <https://des.nc.gov/need-help/covid-19-information>
- d. Golden Leaf Foundation: <https://www.goldenleaf.org/covid-19/>

3. Federal Resources/Guidance:

- a. CDC <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- b. US Small Business Administration: <https://www.sba.gov/page/coronavirus-covid-19-small-business-guidance-loan-resources>

End of Press Release

COVID-19: What to Do If You Feel Sick



1. Stay home and call your doctor, if needed.

Most people who get COVID-19 will recover without needing medical care. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that you stay home if you have mild symptoms – such as fever and cough without shortness of breath or difficulty breathing. You can call your doctor to see if you need medical care.

Some people are at **higher risk** of getting very sick with COVID-19. People at higher risk should call their doctor if they develop symptoms of fever or cough. You are at higher risk if you:

- Are 65 years and older
- Live in a nursing home or long-term care facility
- Have a high-risk condition that includes:
 - Chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma
 - Heart disease with complications
 - Compromised immune system
 - Severe obesity – body mass index (BMI) of 40 or higher
 - Other underlying medical conditions, particularly if not well controlled, such as diabetes, renal failure or liver disease

People who are pregnant should be monitored since they are known to be at risk for severe viral illness. However, to date, data on COVID-19 has not shown increased risk for severe illness.

Call your doctor or 911 right away if you have:

- Shortness of breath
- Difficulty breathing
- Chest pain or pressure
- Confusion
- Blue lips

Most people do not need a test.

When you leave your home to get tested, you could expose yourself to COVID-19 if you do not already have it. If you do have COVID-19, you can give it to someone else, including people who are high risk.

Your doctor can help you decide if you need a test. There is no treatment for COVID-19. For people with mild symptoms who don't need medical care, getting a test will not change what you or your doctor do.

Testing is most important for people who are seriously ill, in the hospital, people in high-risk settings like nursing homes or long-term care facilities, and healthcare workers and other first responders who are caring for those with COVID-19.

2. Isolate yourself.

If you are sick with COVID-19 or believe you might have it, you should stay home and separate yourself from other people in the home as much as possible.



When can I go back to my normal activities?

You can stop isolating yourself when you answer YES to ALL three questions:

- ✓ 1. Has it been at least 7 days since you first had symptoms?
- ✓ 2. Have you been without fever for three days (72 hours) without any medicine for fever?
- ✓ 3. Are your other symptoms improved?

Call your doctor if your symptoms are getting worse or you have any concerns about your health.

What if I'm not sure if I have COVID-19?

If you have fever and cough and other symptoms of respiratory illness, even if it is not from COVID-19, you should isolate yourself as if you have COVID-19. This will reduce the risk of making the people around you sick.

What should my family members do?

Anyone in your household or others who have been in close contact with you should stay home for 14 days as much as possible and monitor themselves for symptoms. Close contact means within six feet for at least 10 minutes. If they start having symptoms of COVID-19, they should take [the same steps](#) to prevent spreading it.

Family members who are healthcare workers, first responders, or others who are needed to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic should review [CDC guidance](#) and check with their employers about when to return to work.

3. Stay informed.

- Visit ncdhhs.gov/coronavirus for information from the NC Department of Health and Human Services.
- Text COVIDNC to 898-211 to get text updates.
- Found out more information on what to do if you are sick at cdc.gov/coronavirus.





Washington County, North Carolina
Coronavirus COVID-19 Response - County Facilities & Operations Modifications Update
Effective March 26, 2020 @ 8:30 AM

(All Information is Provided as Convenience and is Subject to Change Without Further Notice)

DEPARTMENT/AGENCY	STATUS	PHONE/PRIMARY EMAIL
Administration (County Manager/County Attorney/Clerk to the Board)	Offices Closed to the Public Staff available by phone/email	252-793-5823 cpotter@washconc.org jbennett@washconc.org
Airport	Terminal Closed to Public Fueling Operations Open Staff available by phone/email	252-793-9801 kbrabble@washconc.org
Animal Control/Animal Shelter	Shelter Closed to the Public Limited Emergency Operations Only Staff available by phone/email	252-793-2422 gbiggs@washconc.org
Beaufort County Community College Washington County Center (Roper, NC)	Closed to the Public Restricted to Permitted Students Only	252-940-6425 https://www.beaufortccc.edu/
Clerk of Court/Judicial Offices	*Independently Controlled by Judicial System; Most District and Superior Court Cases postponed per applicable orders.	For questions about specific cases visit www.nccourts.gov or call the Washington County Clerk of Court at 252-791-4000
Elections	Offices Closed to the Public, Staff available by phone/email	252-793-6017 elections@washconc.org
Emergency Management/EOC	Offices Closed to the Public, Staff available by phone/email	252-793-4114 emergencymanager@washconc.org
EMS (EMS)	Offices Closed to the Public, Staff available by phone/email	252-793-5823 joneal@washconc.org
Finance Office	Offices Closed to the Public, Staff available by phone/email	252-793-3523 mdixon@washconc.org
GIS/Mapping/Land Records	Offices Closed to the Public, Staff available by phone/email	252-793-2662 hwhite@washconc.org
Health Department (MTW District Health)	*Independently Controlled by MTW District Health Department.	Visit https://mtwdistricthealth.org/ or call 252-793-3023 or 1-800-842-8275 (after hours)
IT	Offices Closed to the Public, Staff available by phone/email	252-793-1176 dfikes@washconc.org
Landfill	Landfill Open under Restrictions	252-793-5615 dbrown@washconc.org
Library (Pettigrew Regional in Plymouth)	Closed (Until Further Notice)	

Maintenance	Offices Closed to the Public, Staff available by phone/email	252-793-5084 lboone@washconc.org
NC State Cooperative Extension Service	Offices Closed to the Public, Staff available by phone/email	252-793-2163 Rebecca.liverman@ncsu.edu
Planning & Building Inspections	Offices Closed to the Public, Staff available by phone/email	252-793-4114 planningdirector@washconc.org
Recreation Department & Facilities	Closed (Until Further Notice)	
Register of Deeds	Offices Closed to the Public; Recordation to Continue Under Pending Restrictions; Contact staff via phone/email for more information.	252-793-2325 https://www.washconc.org/register_of_deeds.aspx tesolen@washconc.org
School System	*Independently Controlled by Washington County Board of Education Closed through May 15 th , 2020	Visit: https://www.wcsnc.org/ or call 252-793-5171 for more information
Senior Center	All Senior Activities and Facilities Closed to the Public; Modified Meal Delivery Operations to Continue Until Further Notice	252-793-3816 vjoyner@washconc.org
Sheriff/911 Communications/Jail	Offices Closed to the Public, Staff available by phone/email	252-793-2422 jbarnes@washconc.org
Social Services	Restricted Lobby Access Only; Staff available by phone/email/appointment.	252-793-4041 https://www.washconc.org/department_of_social_services.aspx
Solid Waste Curbside Pickup	Pickup to continue for waste/recycling placed in official containers only.	For waste pickup questions contact the Washington County Tax Office at 252-793-1176
Soil & Water	Offices Closed to the Public, Staff available by phone/email	252-791-0108 washingtonsoilandwater@gmail.com
Tax Office	Offices Closed to the Public, Staff available by phone/email Consider Making Payments by Mail, Courthouse Parking Lot Drop Box, or Online at: www.officialpayments.com	252-793-1176 swilkins@washconc.org
Veterans Services	Offices Closed to the Public, Staff available by phone/email	252-793-3197 bwalker@washconc.org
Water Department (Treatment/Distribution)	Offices Closed to the Public, Staff available by phone/email	252-793-7545 dluton@washconc.org
Water Department (Billing/Collections)	Offices Closed to the Public, Staff available by phone/email Consider Making Payments by Mail, Courthouse Parking Lot Drop Box, or Online at: www.ccpaymentsservice.com	252-793-4285 wwestbrook@washconc.org

Additional Information Available at: <https://www.washconc.org/default.aspx> and <https://www.facebook.com/Washconc/>