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COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY

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Gov. Beshear: Increasing Cases Requires Kentuckians to Wear Face Coverings

New action taken to fight against increasing COVID-19 cases

Visit the Governor's Facebook page to watch today's news conference

FRANKFORT, Ky. (July 9, 2020) – Highlighting his commitment to protecting all Kentuckians, Gov. Andy Beshear today announced Kentuckians must wear face coverings in many situations if the state is going to stop the increase of novel coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) cases and continue to reopen the economy safely.

"The No. 1 thing a mask can do is protect the health and the life of yourself and those around you," the Governor said. "It can make sure we don't lose more people than we should, it can keep our cases down and it can help us to continue to reopen our economy."

According to health experts, wearing face coverings not only protects others, it also lowers the infection risk for those wearing masks by 65%. The Governor also pointed to analysis from Goldman Sachs showing that if everyone in America was required to wear face coverings in public,

it could save the U.S. economy from losing 5% of the Gross Domestic Product. Gov. Beshear noted that 5% of Kentucky's Gross State Product alone is $10.4 billion. So far, 22 states have implemented some sort of order mandating face coverings, although details vary.

Kentucky's new executive order requires Kentuckians to wear face coverings under several circumstances for the next 30 days. The order will be evaluated during that time to determine any additional steps or extension.

The executive order states that face coverings will be required:

"While inside, or waiting in line to enter, any: retail establishment; grocery store; pharmacy; hair salon/barbershop; nail salon/spa; tattoo parlor; child care facility; restaurant or bar (when not seated and consuming food or beverage); health care setting, or; any other indoor public space in which it is difficult to maintain a physical distance of at least six feet from all individuals who are not members of that person's household;

"While waiting for or riding on public transportation or paratransit, or while riding in a taxi, private car service, or ride-sharing vehicle, or driving any of the above while customers are present; or

"While in outdoor public spaces in which the person cannot maintain a physical distance of six feet from all individuals who are not members of the person's household and is not otherwise covered by previously issued guidance."

There are several exemptions to the order, including children who are 5 or younger and any person with a disability, or a physical or mental impairment, that prevents them from safely wearing a face covering. To read the executive order and more exemptions, click here.

The new executive order is in addition to current *Healthy at Work* and *Healthy at School* guidance already in place for many businesses and schools.

The Governor pointed to more than 3 million people having been infected with this deadly virus in the U.S and how hotspots like Arizona, Texas and Florida have seen sharp spikes in cases. He

noted that health officials in those states are reporting an alarming uptick in use of ICU beds and a tightening of hospital capacity in general.

The Governor said Kentucky needed to take this step, requiring face coverings, so that we don't have to take more drastic measures, like several other states that have seen spikes.

"We have worked too long and hard, and sacrificed too much, to squander the gains we have made in this fight," the Governor said.

Many across the commonwealth and nation have voiced support for more widespread use of face coverings and masks.

"We wholeheartedly support the Governor's call to wear face masks in public," said Garren Colvin, president and chief executive officer of St. Elizabeth Healthcare. "We know this is simply the most effective means of preventing transmission of COVID-19, and represents our best opportunity to diminish the ravaging effects of this pandemic until a vaccine is developed."

"We support Gov. Beshear taking this additional step today to keep our members safe," said John Stovall, president of Teamsters 783. "Masks will not only keep our hard-working employees healthy, but it will keep our economy going and moving forward on to the road to recovery."

The issue is so important, the Governor said, that the Retail Industry Leaders Association is urging "every governor to require consumers who are not encumbered by a medical condition to wear masks when shopping or in public places."

"The business community is supportive of wearing masks as a way to keep the economy going and to keep our workforce and fellow Kentuckians safe," said Ashli Watts, president and chief executive officer of the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce. "We will be reviewing Gov. Beshear's executive order and providing feedback and comments to the administration."

"We want our economy to be able to open safely. We want our schools to be able to open safely. If the numbers of COVID-19 cases continue to surge, it won't be safe," said Lexington Mayor Linda Gorton. "Throughout this pandemic, Gov. Beshear has made the tough calls to keep Kentuckians safe. He's doing that again today."

“I strongly support Governor Beshear’s difficult decision to order mandatory mask-wearing in public. I believe it will slow the spread of the coronavirus, save lives and help us to keep our businesses open and our people working safely,” said Judge-Executive Mike Buchanon from Warren County. “Citizens should gladly support the mandatory mask policy. Wearing a mask is not a lot to ask and is the least we can do to protect our friends, neighbors and family members. Wearing a mask in public will help to slow the spread of the virus and allow us to get back to work, to rebuild our businesses and revive our previously strong economy.”

The Governor reminded everyone that he will host an additional press briefing tomorrow, Friday, July 10, at 4 p.m. EDT.

Case Information

As of 4 p.m. July 9, Gov. Beshear said there were at least 18,245 coronavirus cases in Kentucky, 333 of which were newly reported Thursday.

“When we have higher numbers, it’s hitting all parts of our population,” said Gov. Beshear. “We have a dangerous and deadly virus out there and we are now seeing a regular increase in cases in Kentucky.”

Unfortunately, Gov. Beshear reported four new deaths Thursday, raising the total to 612 Kentuckians lost to the virus.

The deaths reported Thursday include a 93-year-old woman from Clark County; a 79-year-old man from Edmonson County; a 94-year-old man from Knox County; and a 61-year-old man from Pike County.

“An employee in the Secretary of State’s office rings a bell in this Rotunda every day, because she knows every day there’s a family that needs us,” said Gov. Beshear. “I hope you’re continuing to light up your homes green to try to show the right type of empathy and compassion.”

As of Thursday, there have been at least 461,756 coronavirus tests performed in Kentucky. At least 4,939 Kentuckians have recovered from the virus.

“On hospital beds right now, occupancy is about 60%,” said Gov. Beshear. “This is a good number, this means right now we have a significant number of beds for those who get sick.”

For additional information, including up-to-date lists of positive cases and deaths, as well as breakdowns of coronavirus infections by county, race and ethnicity, click here.

CARES Act Funding for Local Health Departments

Today, the Governor announced $36,200,000 in assistance for Kentucky’s local public health departments from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act. These funds will allow the health departments to continue providing essential, front-line public health services in the battle against COVID-19. For more information, click here. Gov. Beshear said the new funding is in addition to $10 million in federal CARES funding announced in May.

Economic Development Update

Today, Gov. Beshear announced the state is investing $2.6 million in to six regional entrepreneurship-resource hubs across the state, also called RISE offices (Regional Innovation for Startups and Entrepreneurs). This statewide system will connect entrepreneurs, innovators and startups with the mentorship, investors, university support, government and community resources they need to turn ideas into thriving businesses.

Gov. Beshear congratulated GE Appliances, a Haier company, on its plans to add 260 new jobs and invest $62 million in upgrades to increase production of washers, dryers, dishwashers and refrigerators.

“I know we went through many years where we wondered if there was going to be a (GE Appliances) facility here and if we were going to have jobs in the long term. And the future is brighter today, even in the midst of what we’re dealing with, than it was 10 years ago,” Gov. Beshear said.

Also, he announced Feralloy Corp. plans to open a steel processing facility in Ghent at the Nucor Steel Gallatin mill. Feralloy plans to create 30 full-time jobs and invest $17.5 million in its facility. The operation will level and cut steel to customer specifications. Thanks to Kentucky’s key geographic position, the Ghent facility will provide Feralloy quicker access to customers across the Ohio Valley region.

“We plan to open the facility this October; opening even at a time when we believe we’re going to continue dealing with this virus. This is a key addition to Kentucky’s primary metals industry, which we continue to see growth in,” Gov. Beshear said.

The commonwealth’s primary metals industry employs nearly 27,000 Kentuckians full-time at approximately 230 facilities statewide.

“I think it’s important as we get together to update the commonwealth on all types of things, that we continue to look at successes that are out there, we continue to let the world know that we are going to carefully continue to reopen for business and we are looking for those new companies that will help lead us in the next 20 years, especially post-vaccine,” the Governor said.

Budget Update

After originally expecting the road fund to have a projected shortfall of $161.8 million, on Thursday the Governor announced the actual shortfall is only $59.9 million. In addition, cities and counties had an initial projected shortfall of $37 million, but the actual shortfall is just $8 million.

“I don’t want to say I’m optimistic because things are still really rough. But more dollars are coming in than expected, and that suggests this economy is going to rebound faster than expected,” said Gov. Beshear.

Unemployment Insurance Update

Today, Gov. Beshear announced two new in-person unemployment insurance assistance locations for the week of July 13-17.

“Now, as we sit here today, we have more than tripled our unemployment insurance work force,” said Gov. Beshear. “We have 100 state government employees and 220 employees from our outside contractor, Ernst & Young, actively processing claims.”

There will be one site in Covington at the Northern Kentucky Convention Center, open on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. There will be another site in Prestonsburg at Big Sandy Community & Technical College, open on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. The Frankfort in-person assistance site at the Mayo-Underwood Building will remain open as well, Monday-Friday. Kentuckians can sign up for an appointment at kcc.ky.gov.

“This week, the Ashland site served 1,316 individuals, Hopkinsville has served 1,000 through today and Somerset has served 1,000 through today as well,” said Gov. Beshear. “We’ve also had over 4,600 in-person appointments here in Frankfort.”

Remembrance

On Thursday, Gov. Beshear celebrated the life of Dana Davis, a front-line health care worker at Baptist Hospital in Louisville. She passed away from COVID-19 at just 51 years old. While she was one of our heroic health care workers, a review is still being conducted on how she contracted the virus, the Governor said.

“She was a mother, grandmother, wife, sister, daughter, and so much more. She was taken from her family far too soon,” said Gov. Beshear. “She enjoyed shopping for antiques, helping others, and most of all, spending time with her grandbabies.”

Her daughter, Brittany, shared that her mom “touched so many lives, had a heart of gold, and was a hero to all who knew her. Please wear your mask, stay at home and social distance for you, for your loved ones, and for our front-line workers.”

More Information

Read about other key updates, actions and information from Gov. Beshear and his administration at governor.ky.gov, kycovid19.ky.gov and the Governor’s official social media accounts Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

Kentuckians can also access translated COVID-19 information and weekly summaries of the Governor’s news conference at tinyurl.com/kygovespanol (Spanish) and tinyurl.com/kygovtranslations (more than 20 additional languages).

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For official news and updates from the Beshear/Coleman administration, visit governor.ky.gov/news.