

The Miller Report

Mendocino Coast COVID-19 Update for the Week of April 13, 2020.

by

William Miller, MD, Mendocino Coast District Hospital Chief of Staff

Tabatha Miller, Fort Bragg City Manager

From William Miller, MD, our hospital's Chief of Staff:

The most important news this week is that we remain without any new cases in the County beyond the first four of a couple of weeks ago. We still have not had any COVID patients admitted to any of the three hospitals thus far. The County Health Department has also expanded testing to the most vulnerable populations in our community. They have now tested 29 staff and residents at Sherwood Oaks, our local nursing home, and as of this writing 17 are negative with the remaining 12 still pending. The County also tested 28 people at Plowshares, the homeless shelter in Ukiah, all of whom were negative. Mendocino Coast Clinics has done 7 tests with 6 negative and one pending. Here at our hospital, we have tested 21 patients and 3 staff, all negative as well. While this may not seem like a lot of tests, it is still significant because all of these tests were either in high risk populations and/or people who had symptoms that could have been COVID. These results, along with the fact that we have not seen any sick patients with the disease, suggest a very low prevalence of the infection here on the Coast at this time. This will likely change once Shelter-in-Place restrictions are loosened, however, we are certainly in a better place now to handle cases that may come to us and at this point, I expect that the numbers will be manageable when that happens.

Our hospital remains on track to affiliate with Adventist Health on May 1st. The COVID crisis has already given us several opportunities to build good relationships with our colleagues in Ukiah and Willits. We have been in frequent communication exchanging ideas, information and protocols. We have shared with them some of our COVID sampling kits (used to get the sample, but not run the test) and they have recently sent us a supply of face masks in return. Ukiah and Willits both now have a small supply of COVID test kits (used to actually run the test) and are running same day COVID tests for us to use for admitted patients and symptomatic health care staff. We expect that to increase in the weeks to come following the affiliation and as more test kits become available.

We have been successful in preserving our supply of N-95 respirator face masks, which will be crucially needed if and when we get any appreciable number of COVID patients. We received a shipment from the State of 1,000 masks to add to our exiting supply of 4,000. While that number may seem like a lot, it is just sufficient to get us through a modest influx of COVID patients, which is what we are expecting.

We have been receiving donations of homemade cloth facemasks from the community and this has been very helpful as we are using them in low risk settings and that is helping us preserve our remaining medical and surgical face masks, which are running low. We can use more of those cloth masks and we also know that Sherwood Oaks and MCC would appreciate them as well. If you are going to make them, there are a lot of patterns on the Internet. The best fabric is a higher thread count of 600 or above, and it should be double ply. Try out the fabric by attempting to breathe through it doubled over and see if it is easy to breathe through or not. Also, avoid fabrics that have a lot of lint. Consider making them in different sizes and with some that have ear loops while others have head bands or tie strings. This is helpful in folks finding a mask that fits effectively and comfortably. A pocket in between the two layers is nice so that filter paper (such as a coffee filter) can be inserted for added protection. A wire to help form the mask over the bridge of the nose reduces fogging up of glasses and face shields. Lastly, while wild colors and patterns are fun, please make at least some of them in tamer colors and without patterns for those of us who wish to make a subtler fashion statement. But, hey, thank you so much for whatever you provide!

From Tabatha Miller, our Fort Bragg City Manager:

On Friday, April 10, Mendocino County's Public Health Officer Noemi Doohan issued a second revised Shelter-in-Place Order. This new Order is thirteen pages long and replaces the March 24th Order which was six pages long. It can be hard to figure out business you can transact and still comply with the order and what if any special precautions one must take. If you have questions or concerns, I would encourage you to call the COVID-19 Call Center at (707) 234-6052. This is staffed from 8:00am to 8:00pm seven days a week. You can also call City Hall at (707) 961-2823 Monday through Friday from 9:00 to 5:00. We have staff that speak Spanish to assist.

Something new in the County's April 10th Order is the requirement that all Essential Businesses must prepare and post a "Social Distancing Protocol" no later than 11:59 pm on April 13, 2020. Don't panic if you haven't completed this task. Most likely, you are doing the necessary tasks and just need to fill out and post the County's check list, which was attached to the new order. This is available on the County's website at <https://www.mendocinocounty.org/community/novel-coronavirus>. Also remember that while a violation of the Order is a misdemeanor, **education is still the focus of any enforcement action**. You will get warned first. The proposed fines of up to \$500 per individual and \$10,000 per business only apply in the unincorporated parts of the County and not the City of Fort Bragg. The City Council decided this action was not necessary within City Limits.

If you are a small business and not operating, take a closer look at the Order. There are a few businesses like bars, nightclubs, hair and other salons, fitness centers, golf courses, hotels operating for any nonessential business, and trying on clothing that are not allowed because they are not essential businesses. But there are some businesses that can still operate, just not in the same way. For example, businesses that ship or deliver groceries, food, goods or services directly to residences may operate as long as all COVID-19 precautionary measures are implemented. Goods or services covers most retail businesses. Fitness centers can do virtual classes and hair salons can provide how-to videos and product kits that are delivered.

If you haven't already, the first step is to make sure the community is aware that you are "open" for business. Westcenter.org has an "Open for Business" page, just for Fort Bragg - and also each of the other communities. There is a form on the left side, just below the "Industry" listing where you can submit your business information. Visit Fort Bragg has the Fort Bragg 2 Go (fortbraggfood.com) website which lists all local restaurants that are open. If you are not listed or need to update your information email melissa@theideacooperative.com.

Second, get your Facebook page updated or your website in place. West Business Development Center at (707) 964-7571 has webinars on how to do this if YouTube video is not your thing. Get creative and deliver or ship your products to your customers. You are allowed to be in your business to secure inventory, ensure security, process payroll and to provide for delivery of existing inventory or gift cards to residences or businesses. I, for one, am a sucker for bonus dollars with purchase, or the buy a \$50 gift card and get an extra \$10 gift card for future use.

If you have questions regarding what you can and cannot do, call the County or City Hall. You will not get in trouble for asking.