



NEWS RELEASE

COVID-19 Response

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Clarification of religious services and face-coverings order



The need has arisen for clarification of a Public Health Order and subsequent guidance issued Tuesday regarding religious services and face coverings.

The County acknowledges the manner in which the order and guidance were created and disseminated created unintended consequences and hardships. The County has taken steps to ensure appropriate notice and coordination will occur in the future as we address the complicated and fast-moving crisis faced by our community and the entire world.

“We recognize the need to act quickly to slow the spread of COVID-19 throughout San Bernardino County,” said Board of Supervisors Chairman Curt Hagman. “But we also recognize that we must take into consideration the myriad of impacts that can be felt in a large and diverse county, and be willing to provide clarification and make adjustments while keeping our communities safe and healthy.”

The specific references to drive-in religious services so close to major religious observances taking place during the next four days, for which organizations had already conducted considerable planning and incurred expenses, are clarified as follows: Organizations that have planned such services for the coming weekend should proceed with those services if they choose to do so and make every effort to prevent contact between congregants.

Regarding the use of face-coverings while driving, there is no need for drivers traveling alone or with members of their households to wear face coverings unless they must lower their windows to interact with first responders, food service workers, or others who are not members of their households.

Other clarifying guidance will be forthcoming.

On the subject of enforcement, the public is advised that although violation of a health order is a violation of the California Health and Safety Code, the County does not expect law enforcement to broadly impose citations on violators. The expectation is that law enforcement will rely upon community members to use good judgment, common sense, and act in the best interests of their own health and the health of their loved ones and the community at large. The imposition of penalties on members of the public who willfully and grossly disregard public health orders by putting others at risk of exposure to this infectious disease is meant as a tool for law enforcement to use as a deterrent.

San Bernardino County has 547 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and the deaths of 17 county residents have been associated with the disease.

Various appropriate County departments and agencies have been working together since Jan. 25 to protect the community from the COVID-19 pandemic.

For information about the coronavirus crisis, visit the County's coronavirus website at sbcovid19.com. New information and resources are updated daily. The public can also contact the COVID-19 hotline from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday at (909) 387-3911, or email the County at coronavirus@dph.sbcounty.gov.