



For Immediate Release

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JEFFERSON COUNTY UNIFIED COMMAND CENTER UPDATES FOR MAY 5, 2020

Birmingham, AL – The Jefferson County Unified Command Center (JCUC) and its partner agencies continue to help provide information, goods and services to the people of Jefferson County throughout the COVID-19 pandemic response. Dr. Mark Wilson, Jefferson County Health Officer, and Jim Coker, Director of Jefferson County Emergency Management Agency serve as the co- leaders of the Unified Command Center.

Battelle Critical Care Decontamination System:

With assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Alabama Emergency Management Agency in partnership with the Alabama Army National Guard has acquired, delivered and assembled one of 60 Battelle Critical Care Decontamination Systems across the country, and has strategically placed it within the City of Birmingham.

The shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is posing a tremendous challenge to the U.S. healthcare system and first responder communities. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has authorized use of the Battelle Critical Care Decontamination System™ (CCDS) for the decontamination and reuse of N95 respirators as needed during times of critical shortage.

A single Battelle CCDS™ can decontaminate up to 80,000 N95 respirators a day, making them available for reuse by healthcare workers and first responders. By using the Battelle System, an N95 respirator can be decontaminated up to 20 times and still maintain sufficient filtration performance.

A video produced by the Alabama National guard regarding the Battelle CCDS can be viewed here:
<https://www.dvidshub.net/video/750878/battelle-brings-alabama-national-guard-assistance-birmingham>

Public Health Update:

Jefferson County has had a higher number of new COVID-19 cases in the last 2 weeks compared to the two weeks prior to that:

- 4/4/20 – 4/17/20: 150 new cases
- 4/18/20 – 5/1/20: 271 new cases

Almost half of the new cases in the past 2 weeks are related to skilled nursing facilities (nursing homes), either residents or staff. A task force organized by our local hospitals has been working on ways to help address this problem, in collaboration with the Nursing Home Association, the Alabama Hospital Association, the Jefferson County Department of Health and others.

Work continues to bring more COVID-19 community testing sites online. These will be announced to the public in future updates.

Work continues to fully operationalize the old Salvation Army site as a quarantining unit for people who need to be in homeless shelters. This will serve as a safe place to house people temporarily to assure they are free from COVID-19 before they enter one of our local shelters.

Reminder: Please be considerate to others, and wear a face covering whenever you go into stores or other public places.

City of Birmingham Face Ordinance Amended

Mayor Randall L. Woodfin has recommended and the Birmingham City Council has approved an amended mandatory face covering ordinance currently in effect. The updated ordinance focuses on requirements concerning offices, job sites, children and daycare facilities. The ordinance will be in effect through 11:59 p.m. on May 15, 2020 unless the situation surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic requires an extension.

The ordinance requires facial coverings in public places in the city to slow the spread of the coronavirus disease.

While the ordinance provides an exemption for children under the age of two, it also clarifies requirements for children eight years old and younger. Parents, guardians and caregivers of children eight years old or younger should exercise judgment regarding the ability of those children to consistently wear a face covering or mask.

Daycares and other childcare establishments shall provide parents with information on the facility's procedures for use of face coverings or masks. Where the consistent use of face coverings or masks are not possible due to the supervision of multiple children, the facility should adhere to sanitary, hygienic and face covering practices to the maximum extent practicable.

Additional changes include identifying exemptions due to safety risks at work sites. The ordinance details exemptions where a face covering may pose a risk to people:

- Working on ladders or at height
- Wearing other respiratory protection
- Heavy physical exertion
- Operating heavy equipment
- Working in an environment where a face covering or mask hinders communications

In such cases where there are exemptions, employers are encouraged to structure work to promote social distancing and limit close contact as much as possible.

The ordinance also specifies people do not need to wear a face covering while working alone in separate office spaces or in non-public workplaces where there is more than adequate social distancing, based on the size of and number of people in the space.

People should be prepared to put on a face covering when interacting with others, particularly in groups of 10 or more people or where social distancing cannot be maintained.

Exemptions identified in the original ordinance remain in place, including:

- Exercise
- People receiving medical or dental examinations
- Physical and mental health and safety reasons

Both the ordinance and a set of frequently asked questions may be reviewed at www.birminghamal.gov/coronavirus

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