



NEWS

April 16, 2020

For Immediate Release

Update on County Response to COVID-19

Redwood City – The County of San Mateo continues to work to protect public health and safety in response to the novel coronavirus known as COVID-19.

The County of San Mateo's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) remains open to coordinate countywide response and communications in response to the situation. The EOC's Joint Information Center will provide daily status reports Monday through Friday until further notice. Today's report:

Public Safety Dispatchers Week Spotlights Role During COVID-19

This year's celebration for San Mateo County's Public Safety Communications 9-1-1 dispatch center is taking on a special meaning just two months after moving into the new call center at the Regional Operations Center in Redwood City and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The San Mateo County Board of Supervisors presented a proclamation at its April 7 meeting designating April 12-18 as Public Safety Dispatchers Week as part of National Public Safety Telecommunications Week.

Call volume has dropped since the San Mateo County Health Officer first issued the shelter in place order. On March 16, County dispatchers fielded 808 calls which is roughly 200 more calls than the communications center usually receives on any given day, many of those calls flagged as COVID-19 related. But as more people stay home and off the roads, the number of calls has fallen with close to 5,000 less calls for the month of March compared to March last year. Dispatchers say resources like the 2-1-1 call center, www.smcgov.org, social media posts, and public service announcements have also made a difference in decreasing the number of calls to the center.

While the call volume has dropped, dispatchers say time spent on each call has increased. That's at least partly because of the additional COVID-19 screening questions that dispatchers and call takers attempt to ask each caller, a way to prepare paramedics, firefighters and law enforcement partners.

This screening protocol was first implemented by the call center on Feb. 6, 2020, to ask callers about recent travel but has since been updated to inquire about flu-like symptoms.

Protocol inside the call center has also changed since the COVID-19 outbreak, including increased cleaning and rearranging desks to enable social distancing. Employees who have the ability to telework are doing so, but call takers and dispatchers remain on site. The Center is currently off-limits to anyone who is not on-duty personnel or has an essential purpose to visit.

“It is a team effort, and we are all doing our part by cleaning workspaces more frequently,” said Natasha Claire-Espino, assistant public safety communications director. “We are so grateful to be in the new Regional Operations Center, and to the Board and the residents of the county who’ve made it possible. The space, light, equipment, and environment of the new center gives us greater flexibility especially to deal with this public health crisis.”

COVID-19 Graphics Library Available for Download

The Joint Information Center has created a suite of COVID-19 graphics that convey key topics, including social distancing, quarantine and isolation, and suggestions for coping with anxiety in multiple languages. Permission is granted to download all graphics at <https://cmo.smcgov.org/eoc>

San Mateo County COVID-19 Cases

San Mateo County Health has updated the number of positive cases to 767 as of April 15, 2020.

County Health provides detailed information on cases by age group and date and deaths by age group. Learn more at <https://www.smchealth.org/coronavirus>

Call Center

Residents with non-medical, non-emergency questions about the coronavirus can call 211 at any time, day or night. Callers from landlines and cellular telephones located within San Mateo County are connected with a trained service professional from 211, a confidential service available in 180 languages.

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