



NEWS

October 16, 2020

For Immediate Release

County Launches Business COVID-19 Compliance Team *Residents can report violations online or via 211*

Redwood City – Beginning Monday, the County of San Mateo will launch its new COVID-19 Compliance Team, an eight-person unit tasked with responding to reports of businesses not following local or state health orders related to the pandemic and coordinating with cities on outreach.

The enforcement team is one prong of the County's Business Engagement and Compliance Program. The other half is aimed at first educating business owners about complying with requirements for all businesses including, but not limited to:

- making sure customers and employees wear face coverings at all times unless seated at a dining establishment.
- preparing, posting and following a Social Distancing Protocol.
- ensuring that employees who are sick do not come to work.
- confirming that customers are able to remain 6 feet or more apart.

"We want to work with businesses and make sure they are maintaining a safe environment for their employees and their customers," said County Manager Mike Callagy. "We'd love to never have to issue any citations but there is too much at stake for the community's safety and economic health."

Starting Monday, Oct. 19, 2020, residents will be able to report an alleged violation for investigation via an online portal accessible from the County's homepage: www.smcgov.org The submission form asks for the resident's name and contact information, information about the business and the nature of the complaint and if he or she has previously contacted authorities about these concerns.

Residents wishing to report violations of individuals, such as large social gatherings, should still contact their local law enforcement agency's non-emergency line. Do not call 9-1-1.

While the online portal is the preferred and primary way to submit a report regarding businesses, those needing language assistance or someone to enter their complaint into the portal for them can call 2-1-1.

Businesses will be notified in writing if an allegation about noncomplying with state or local COVID 19 requirements has been received. The written warning will include information to assist the business in correcting any alleged practice. Subsequent complaints will result in onsite investigation by compliance team members who will wear shirts identifying them as compliance officers and carry identification.

If businesses continue to violate the orders, they could be subject to civil penalties, according to an urgency ordinance passed by the Board of Supervisors on Aug. 4, 2020 which authorized administrative penalties for individuals, organizations and businesses who violate health orders. Administrative citations for commercial entities start at a minimum of \$250 and can go as high as \$3,000 per instance depending on the gravity of the health risk, prior warnings, intent to profit from the violation and good faith efforts to comply.

Businesses can appeal citations with a written or oral hearing by submitting a form found here: <https://cmo.smcgov.org/hearing-request-administrative-citation>

The centralized reporting system for business violations helps the County maintain a master list. Previously, reports of businesses went to local law enforcement agencies which made it challenging to understand the scope of non-compliance in San Mateo County and focus efforts to enforce state and health orders.

Under the state of California's Blueprint for a Safer Economy, businesses, places of worship and other organizations must follow specific safety protocols and guidelines for their operations. For a list of these requirements in San Mateo County by industry, visit <https://covid19.ca.gov/safer-economy/>

#