



# NEWS

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March 2, 2021

**For Immediate Release**

## **One Year Ago Today:**

### **Life Interrupted as COVID-19 Pandemic Hits; County of San Mateo Opens Emergency Operations Center**

**County provides nearly \$100 million in direct relief since the pandemic began**

**Redwood City** – One year ago, children across San Mateo County gathered to enjoy “Read Across America Day.”

In the presidential race, Vice President Joe Biden had just won his first primary.

Local news headlines said a sold-out home crowd of 18,064 saw the injury-plagued Golden State Warriors lose by 14 at home the night before. Students at high schools in Burlingame, Redwood City and Half Moon Bay, meanwhile, celebrated weekend sports championships.

And everyone enjoyed a balmy 70 degrees from Daly City to Half Moon Bay and San Mateo. In short, a fine late-winter day.

That is until news broke that San Mateo County Health [reported the first known local](#) case of COVID-19.

“That was the pivotal moment when life as we knew it changed. We didn’t know at the time just how profound those changes would be,” said County Manager Mike Callagy, who also serves as the countywide head of emergency services. “This is a moment we will all remember because since then we’ve all been challenged like nothing before in most of our lifetimes.”

The County set the foundation to activate the Emergency Operations Center, or EOC, weeks before. County Health detected the threat from COVID-19 and activated its own Department Operations Center as the [coronavirus reached the United States](#) in January.

The County then ramped up the EOC's planning functions and staffing to prepare for the March 2, 2020 activation – when its operations went 24/7.

"The Emergency Operations Center is the heart and soul of our community's response to COVID-19," said David J. Canepa, president of the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors and chair of the countywide Emergency Services Council.

"The heart because the EOC is where the people are in place to plan for and respond to the immediate health and safety needs of our community. And the soul because the EOC is also where we work to ensure that the most vulnerable members of our community have access to food, shelter and the care they need to get them through this crisis," Canepa said.

Since the pandemic began, the County through the EOC has led the response through accurate and timely communications to the public and organizing, coordinating and providing vital services to the community. This include \$97 million in direct relief to individuals, families, small businesses and community-serving organizations.

As compiled by the [SMC Recovery Initiative](#), the County has provided:

- \$16.05 million to 4,269 individuals and families
- \$11 million to 657 small businesses
- \$38.56 million to community-serving nonprofit organizations
- \$4 million to Second Harvest Food Bank to help provide food to residents
- 1,208 individuals served in supportive housing for isolation and quarantine (Alternative Housing Sites), along with step-down medical support (Alternative Care Site)
- Approximately 1.5 million meals to vulnerable residents through the Great Plates Delivered program

The COVID-19 pandemic by the numbers:

- Total individuals vaccinated: 157,337
- Individuals who completed two-shot vaccine series: 61,621
- Total shots in the arm: 218,958
- Total COVID-19 cases: 38,865
- Total COVID-19-related deaths: 521

*Data as of March 1, 2021*

The EOC is embedded in the County's Regional Operations Center, or ROC, a \$64.5 million, two-story building on the County Center campus in downtown Redwood City that opened in late 2019. The ROC also includes the 9-1-1 system of Public Safety Communications and the daily offices of the San Mateo County Area Office of Emergency Services. Those County offices moved into the ROC only months before the County declared an [emergency due to the pandemic](#).

"As the enormity of the COVID-19 pandemic became clear, the County activated the Emergency Operations Center to coordinate resources and respond quickly and effectively," said Dan Belville, director of the San Mateo County Office of Emergency Services.

"We were able to mobilize rapidly and bring all of the key players together," he said. "This is incredibly important in the first stages of a crisis because you need to establish clear lines of communication and determine who is doing what. And just as important, we were able to eventually wind-down the in-person operation to minimize exposure without any loss in efficiency."

Callagy said he is "proud of this county for the way the elected officials, County staff, private industry, nonprofit organizations and residents have pulled together to address this unprecedented crisis."

This includes coming together to form the [San Mateo County Strong Fund](#), a public-private initiative that raises funds to help individuals, small businesses and nonprofit groups that are financially struggling due to the pandemic.

For updates on the County response to COVID-19, sign up for news alerts at  
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