Nevada COVID-19 News Update: 3/19 (PM)

The COVID-19 situation in Nevada is constantly changing, and we will continue to update you with major breaking news as it becomes available. Additionally, we will continue to keep you updated with general news and information about COVID-19 and the state’s response at regular intervals.

Highlights from today (which can be found in greater detail in the article text below) include:

• Nevada Governor Sisolak issuing an Executive Order officially mandating the statewide gaming shutdown announced two days ago.

• The Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department (LVMPD) announced enforcing the “non-essential” business closure proposed by Governor Sisolak on March 17 “would require an executive order which has not been made available to LVMPD.” An official executive order from the Governor mandating these business closures has not yet been released as of this email.

• During a video conference with the President Trump and Vice President Pence, Nevada Governor Sisolak requested stimulus dollars for the Nevada gaming/hospitality industry “to help with the facilitation of getting our economy back going again.” According to the press release (attached) sent out moments ago by the Governor’s staff, “the President responded positively to the Governor’s suggestions, and assured the Governor that would be something that he and his staff would consider.”

• 4 of Nevada’s rural counties have announced positive COVID-19 test results within their jurisdictions. The results in these counties plus Clark (Las Vegas) and Washoe (Reno) bring the state total to 95 positive test results.

  • Additionally, the first positive test result within a school (in Clark County) was announced today.

• The state has updated its COVID-19 information clearinghouse website with a “data dashboard.” The dashboard displays information on the number of tests that have been conducted, the results of those tests and demographic breakdowns.

Please see the full news entries from the Nevada Independent below and let us know if you have any questions, or if you would like to discuss this further.

Thank you, FPA

Sisolak to Trump: Include gaming industry in coronavirus recovery package, which president calls ‘great idea’

Gov. Steve Sisolak asked President Donald Trump to consider the state’s hospitality industry in any recovery package approved by the federal government to counter the economic damage caused by the coronavirus outbreak.
Sisolak made the request Thursday during a videoconference between the nation’s governors, the president and Vice President Mike Pence. Sisolak told the president about his decision to shutter the state’s non-essential businesses — including casinos — during the outbreak and asked the president to consider supporting the industry with any federal stimulus package, saying it would “definitely be helpful if we could include them in any recovery package that is brought forward.”

“I have, unfortunately, had to shut down the Strip in Las Vegas, and tens of thousands of hospitality workers have been displaced as a result of that,” he said, according to a transcript of the call. “And while they’re getting some compensation and filing for unemployment, anything to help we could get from your end, to help with the facilitation of getting our economy back going again would go a long, long way. This is our number one industry in Nevada.”

Trump told Sisolak that the concept was a “great idea” and “something we’ll be thinking about.”

The American Gaming Association estimated today that nearly 616,000 casino gaming and resort employees nationally were out of work due to casino closures, including some 206,000 workers in Nevada.

— Riley Snyder, Thursday March 19 at 7:10 p.m.

**Washoe County confirms four new cases of novel coronavirus**

Confirmed cases of the novel coronavirus hit 18 in Washoe County on Thursday after the health district reported four new cases. In a statement, the Washoe County Health District said in all four cases, those infected with the virus are “self-isolating and are in stable condition.”

One woman in her 60s contracted the coronavirus outside of Nevada and is self-isolating in another state. In another case, a woman in her 30s had close contact with another case. The two other cases, a woman in her 60s and a man in his 70s, contracted coronavirus with no known travel history.

— Daniel Rothberg, Thursday March 19 at 6:37 p.m.

**Clark County employee tests positive for coronavirus**

An employee at Clark County’s Department of Family Services has tested positive for the novel coronavirus, with another self-quarantining due to a high risk of exposure.

Clark County spokesman Erik Pappa said in an email Thursday evening that the department had been notified by health district officials regarding the employee testing positive for the virus, but stated that neither the confirmed case or other individual self-quarantining did not come in “contact with children or families that interact with the department.”
Pappa said in an email that as a precautionary measure, county officials had directed employees in the department to work remotely, and that a professional will fully sanitize the facility before it is reopened “to limited staff supporting the essential functions of the department and its Child Abuse and Neglect hotline.” The hotline is currently operating from a secondary location.

— Riley Snyder, Thursday March 19 at 6:13 p.m.

Clark County rises to 74 confirmed cases of novel coronavirus

Confirmed cases of the novel coronavirus in Clark County have risen to 74, an increase of five since Wednesday, the Southern Nevada Health District said in a statement on Thursday.

The health district did not provide any details on the individuals who tested positive for the virus. Total confirmed cases in the state are at 95, according to a database kept by the state.

— Riley Snyder, Thursday March 19 at 4:59 p.m.

Las Vegas police suspend sex offender registration services, other records transactions

Las Vegas police are closing some of their divisions to the public in a move that will make sex offender registration, convicted felon registration and concealed weapons permitting unavailable for the time being.

The announcement on Wednesday noted that the department is “working diligently” to implement an online application to process concealed weapons permits electronically. There are nearly 80,000 people in Clark County who have a concealed carry weapon permit, which is valid for five years.

To register as a sex offender, a person must go to police headquarters, submit photos, give a DNA sample and have their fingerprints and palm prints taken.

Under a law that took effect in 2018, sex offenders who could previously renew their registration online or through the mail have to visit a police station in person as often as every three months.

There are more than 7,000 sex offenders in Nevada, and all are now required to do some sort of in-person registration each year under the new, more stringent law. The state estimates that more than a third of the sex offenders in Nevada are out of compliance with the law.

— Michelle Rindels, Thursday, March 19, 5 p.m.

Reno, Sparks justice courts suspend default evictions, postpone many proceedings amid outbreak
The Reno Justice Court has issued an order postponing many proceedings and halting default evictions during the coronavirus pandemic.

The order issued Thursday also requires any in-custody court proceedings to be carried out by videoconference or telephonically, and closes the lobby and courtrooms to all but the attorneys and parties involved. Members of the public and the media must make specific requests to observe the proceedings, and those requests might be accommodated by an opportunity to view the proceedings by livestream.

It also specifies that deadlines and default provisions in state eviction law are suspended, and no lockout order will be granted by default (meaning automatically because a tenant does not show up to court) during this period of suspension.

Trials are also postponed for 60 days unless the defendant invokes the right to a speedy trial. The order is meant to be reviewed every 30 days.

The Sparks Justice Court issued a similar order on Wednesday, suspending default evictions for at least 30 days.

— Michelle Rindels, Thursday, March 19, 3:20 p.m.

**Nellis Air Force Base reports first coronavirus case**

Nellis Air Force base is reporting that a NATO service member on base has tested positive for the novel coronavirus, the first positive case at the base.

According to a press release, the service member entered isolation at the “time of system onset,” and has received medical treatment, and the Air Force Base is “following guidance” from the Centers for Disease Control and Protection for individuals who had close contact with the affected person. The service member was on base for a Red Flag exercise, a realistic aerial war game regularly held between U.S. and NATO pilots.

The current Red Flag exercise, which was cut short due to the COVID-19 outbreak, was scheduled to run between March 9 and March 20 and included aircraft from several countries. The base said that flight operations for the exercise have concluded and that participating personnel are returning to their home stations.

— Riley Snyder, Thursday March 19 at 3:02 p.m.

**UNR won’t offer refunds for on-campus housing amid coronavirus outbreak**

The University of Nevada, Reno will not be issuing refunds to students forced to move out of on-campus housing this week following declarations from Gov. Steve Sisolak and system Chancellor Thom Reilly that all non-essential operations should close amid the ongoing
outbreak of the novel coronavirus — including on-campus living for most Nevada college students.

In a statement posted to UNR’s coronavirus resource page, the university said that “residents remain financially responsible for their housing assignments even if they are off-campus,” adding that operating expenses for the building must continue to be paid, even if most students have moved out and that contracts for such buildings are semesterly or annual — not monthly or weekly.

Reilly directed Nevada institutions to ask all students who could move out to do so on Wednesday, and UNR issued its own directive this week asking students to be moved out of the university’s eight residence halls by March 25.

The university added that because regular instruction will begin again through online classes after spring break, no refunds will be issued for tuition, either.

Students may be able to receive up to 50 percent of their money back for pricey university parking permits, however, so long as the permit is mailed back to UNR by April 5.

In Southern Nevada, UNLV announced Wednesday that outstanding room and board costs would be prorated, and students who have already paid for their housing in full can receive refunds. Both universities house roughly 3,000 students, though many of UNLV’s on-campus students reside at a private apartment complex, The Degree, that has partnered with the university.

— Jacob Solis, 3/19/20 at 2:55 p.m.

48 Las Vegas police employees give notice of “potential exposure” to COVID-19

The Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department announced Thursday that 48 of its employees have “given notice of potential workplace exposure” to the novel coronavirus, but said that did not indicate that there were any presumptive positive cases of the virus among its workforce or those employees.

The police agency said the 48 employees gave notice “out of an abundance of caution if they think they’ve been exposed,” but that is a preliminary step required under workers compensation law.

“These cases may involve individuals who aren’t presenting symptoms of COVID-19,” the agency said in a press release. “These could also be cases of the common cold, allergies, the flu, or anything else that would result in a report.”

On Tuesday, the police department announced it would begin enforcing strict hygiene standards including directing officers to wear gloves while making arrests.

— Riley Snyder, Thursday, March 19 at 2:39 p.m.
Elko County announces first coronavirus case; virus has now reached six Nevada counties

The novel coronavirus has now spread to six of Nevada’s 17 counties with Elko County officials announcing Thursday afternoon that a woman in her 30s is the first positive case in the county.

County officials said in a statement that the woman was tested for the virus on Monday after experiencing symptoms and that she has since been in self-isolation. State officials are working to track the woman’s contacts and monitor her and her family in her home.

Elko County officials are reminding residents that the immediate risk to the general public in the county is “considerably low.”

There are 95 confirmed cases of the coronavirus across Nevada. In addition to the Elko case, residents in Clark, Washoe, Douglas and Nye counties and Carson City have tested positive for the virus.

— Megan Messerly, 3/19/20 at 1:45 p.m.

Sisolak executive order allows casino hotels to stay open ‘if needed … for emergency purposes’

Gov. Steve Sisolak has issued an executive order allowing casino resorts to stay open if they are doing it to avoid guest displacement or for “essential or emergency purposes.”

The executive order enshrines some of the statements Sisolak made on Tuesday, when he called for “non-essential” businesses to close in an effort to slow the spread of coronavirus. Many casinos had voluntarily closed their doors in advance of the declaration.

The order, signed Thursday, is effective until April 16.

— Michelle Rindels, Thursday, March 19, 1:30 p.m.

First coronavirus case in Clark County schools reported

A “member” of the Lomie G. Heard Magnet School in North Las Vegas has tested presumptive positive for the novel coronavirus, the school announced on Facebook on Thursday.

The North Las Vegas magnet school first informed parents of the presumptive positive case on Wednesday night, according to the Las Vegas Review-Journal, and posted the news on its Facebook page on Thursday.

The missive to parents said that the school is working with the Southern Nevada Health District to identify anyone who was in close contact with the patient, and that a deep cleaning and disinfecting of the entire campus was completed this week. Like all schools in the state, it will
remain closed until April 13 following an order from Gov. Steve Sisolak aimed at reducing spread of the virus.

A spokesman for the school district said the district will provide additional information as soon as possible in cooperation with the health district.

— Riley Snyder, Thursday, March 19 at 1:31 p.m.

Las Vegas police say they won’t respond to reports of businesses staying open amid governor’s directive to close

Las Vegas police say they’re not responding to calls for services from people reporting businesses that are not abiding by Gov. Steve Sisolak’s directive to close.

The agency said in a statement to the press on Thursday that the decision came “due to the amount of requests.” The department also said enforcing Sisolak’s guidelines “would require an executive order which has not been made available to LVMPD at the time of this request.”

On Tuesday evening, Sisolak called on all “non-essential” businesses to close down by Wednesday, and has since issued a more comprehensive list of what he defines as non-essential. The governor’s office didn’t immediately respond to a request Thursday afternoon about whether an executive order enshrining his directive is forthcoming.

At least one other jurisdiction — Reno — is threatening action against businesses that defy the order. Reno officials sent out a notice late Wednesday saying they have authority to enforce the moratorium through fines of up to $1,000 a day, suspension or revocation of a business license, or a misdemeanor citation.

“The City of Reno is requesting and hoping that this current crisis can be addressed in collaboration with all our residents and business owners,” officials said in a statement. “The City of Reno has no desire to take enforcement action on businesses.”

— Michelle Rindels, Thursday, March 19, 12:25 p.m.

State unveils new coronavirus statistics dashboard, counts 95 confirmed cases in Nevada

Nevada has 95 confirmed cases of coronavirus after testing more than 1,700 people to date, according to new tallies from the state.

The Nevada Department of Health and Human Services unveiled an online dashboard Thursday with statistics on testing and cases. The numbers are higher than the 86 cases that have been publicly reported by local health authorities to date — a discrepancy that the state attributes to differences in the timing of information releases.
According to the statistics, which are current through Wednesday night, there have been 1,974 tests performed on 1,721 individuals. The Nevada State Public Health Laboratory has conducted the most tests — nearly 1,000 — while the Southern Nevada Health District has done 460 and two private labs combined have done more than 500.

The death toll remains at one.

Gov. Steve Sisolak has acknowledged the state does not have the resources it needs to conduct widespread testing to understand the scope of the illness’ spread. State officials have pending requests for more supplies, and are prioritizing patients at highest risk, including those who had close contact with people who have COVID-19.

The statistics are expected to be released daily from Tuesday through Saturday, in alignment with the national update schedule of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

“The COVID-19 dashboard will provide much-needed updates and information on individuals who have been tested which benefits all Nevada communities as we strive to mitigate the spread of this illness,” State Epidemiologist Melissa Peek-Bullock said in a statement.

Officials noted that the dashboard reflects laboratory results, and may include some people who do not live in Nevada. Those cases will be removed as they are located once epidemiologists conduct their investigation.

— Michelle Rindels, Thursday, March 19, 11:40 a.m.

**State health and safety department memo outlines new coronavirus regulations for mining, construction, manufacturing industries**

Regulators with the state’s Occupational Safety and Health Administration released new guidelines Wednesday outlining new safety measures for mining, construction and manufacturing operations that are remaining open following a directive from the governor that all non-essential businesses should close.

Those guidelines include enforcement of effective social distancing recommendations, such as limiting meetings to no more than 10 people or establishing six-foot distances between individual workers, as well as increased sanitation measures and guarantees of access to sanitary water supplies.

The mining, construction and manufacturing sectors are some of the industries that have been labeled as essential operations, and have thus avoided the 30-day closure requested Tuesday by Gov. Steve Sisolak.

— Jacob Solis, 3/19/20 at 11:30 a.m.
ICE says it will delay enforcement actions during pandemic for those who are not public safety risks

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has announced that it would exercise discretion to delay enforcement actions for individuals who do not pose “public safety risks” and who are not subject to mandatory detention until after the COVID-19 pandemic subsides.

A statement released on Wednesday said that the agency would utilize alternatives to detention and not carry out enforcement operations at or near health care facilities, "except in the most extraordinary of circumstances."

“Individuals should not avoid seeking medical care because they fear civil immigration enforcement,” the statement said. “Homeland Security Investigations will continue to carry out mission critical criminal investigations and enforcement operations as determined necessary to maintain public safety and national security.”

The announcement came after local attorneys and advocacy groups sent an open letter on Tuesday to regional ICE officials, urging the officials to immediately cease all ICE field operations and to develop and implement plans in cooperation with local health districts to prevent and manage the spread of COVID-19 at local jails and privately run detention centers where ICE detainees are kept.

“ICE needs to understand that immigration enforcement tears families apart and spreads fear — the opposite of what we need right now. We hope to see real changes based on this statement,” said Paloma Guerrero, attorney with the UNLV Immigration Clinic in an email on Wednesday.

The letter raised concerns that people in detention are more vulnerable to infection, citing crowded and unsanitary conditions, poor ventilation and lack of adequate access to hygiene and cleaning supplies. It asked ICE to prioritize the release of high-risk individuals — those with serious medical conditions, pregnant women and people age 60 and older.

On Wednesday, ICE spokeswoman Tanya J. Roman provided a statement from the agency saying that as of March 17 there were no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in ICE detention facilities. Roman added that the facilities were following posted guidelines and guidance from The ICE Occupational Safety and Health Unit to safeguard employees and personnel during the pandemic.

— Shannon Miller, Thursday, March 19, 10:45 a.m.

Nevada Mining Association says state has approved ‘modified operations’

The Nevada Mining Association released a statement Thursday saying that “the state has authorized modified operations of mining and mineral exploration” to comply with coronavirus mitigation measures requiring the 30-day closure of many non-essential businesses.
The industry group said that the industry would continue working with state officials to adjust their operations "as new information becomes available."

“At this time, the state has authorized modified operations of mining and mineral exploration in adherence with current guidelines and those that are likely to come as new information becomes available,” Tyre Gray, the association's president, said in the statement. “We are committed to continuing to monitor the situation and follow the guidance of our regulators and health care professionals.”

Although employees are already staggered at mining operations, many ride buses into work and others are stationed at offices. Nevada Gold Mines, a joint-venture between Barrick and Newmont, told the Elko Daily Free Press on Wednesday that it took "immediate action to start reducing the number of our employees per bus to and from our operations to support social distancing guidelines."

— Daniel Rothberg

Source: Ferrari Public Affairs