

Public Safety Alert!

April 10, 2020
Osage County, Missouri
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Health Department

Good afternoon this Good Friday. This is Susan Long with the Osage County Health Department. I wanted to provide you with an update before we all start our Easter weekend under the most unique circumstances that I'm sure we will ever see. Our count at this time is 1 open positive case with 5 contacts in quarantine. In addition, we have another contact to a case from outside of the county also in quarantine. There are people still being tested in the county because they have symptoms suggestive of COVID-19. This means we can't let our guard down! We don't know whether the numbers will start going down or will continue to go up. It can plateau and remain steady at elevated levels for a while. This is why the stay at home orders are in effect for several weeks. It doesn't mean that people will miraculously stop getting this virus, so we must continue to be cautious. We had an Osage County first responder tested this week for COVID-19, and luckily, the result was negative. There was no contact to a known case, so this was scary! Our first responders are still taking care of regular business in their fields and a loss of only 1 of them could be devastating, even if it is only temporary. The CDC issued interim guidance for essential personnel to continue to work if they had an exposure. My interpretation of this was for first responders, and in an emergency situation only, such as for a severe shortage of personnel. Over the last 26+ years in public health, I've learned the power of quarantining with other outbreaks of other contagious diseases. We will get the current outbreak over with more quickly and we are ACTIVELY preventing the spread of disease to others through the use of quarantining.

The Osage County Health Department and the Governor's Stay at Home Orders have been in place for almost a week. The health department was not overrun with reports of violations of the orders. For the most part, it seems that everyone has been able to do their part according to the Orders. I hope that people are using this time wisely to spend this extra time with their household. I miss my family. It will be hard to not see my grandkids together with their parents this Sunday, but I have to do the right thing just like everyone else.

I am glad to hear that people are getting out with social distancing, BUT I need to remind everyone that with the warmer weather and going into the great outdoors, that ticks are plentiful. We got our first 3 tick-borne illness reports this week. Please make sure that you are protecting yourself and your pets from ticks when you go out.

If you haven't done the census yet, please do so soon. This is important for the county for future funding from the federal level for the next 10 years.

I'd like to thank all the well-wishers to my reminder that this is National Public Health Week. Your kind words or actions gave all of us an extra boost here at the health department! For those of you making cloth facemasks for others, thank you so much! For everyone doing their part during this time, thank you! Please take the time this weekend to be thankful for what you do have! Please keep those who are sick and those who have a loved one who is sick in your prayers or your thoughts. And please keep our first responders, health care workers and their loved ones in your prayers and thoughts also. Together, we will get through this!