

ORDER OF THE HEALTH OFFICER OF THE COUNTY OF MERCED DIRECTING HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS TO REPORT PATIENTS SEEN WITH FEBRILE RESPIRATORY ILLNESS TO MERCED COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH; DIRECTING EMPLOYERS TO SCREEN EMPLOYEES FOR FEBRILE RESPIRATORY ILLNESS; AND DIRECTING INDIVIDUALS LIVING WITHIN THE COUNTY TO SELF-MONITOR FOR SIGNS OF COVID-19 AND APPROPRIATELY ISOLATE.

DATE OF ORDER: April 7, 2020

Pursuant to California Health and Safety Code Sections 101040, 120175, and 120175.5(b) the Health Officer of the County of Merced orders as follows:

1. Whereas the World Health Organization declared a worldwide pandemic of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19), a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person, and is contained in the droplets that can be sneezed, coughed, or exhaled into the air by infected individuals.
2. Whereas today, there are over 1,381, 014 cases in the world and over 78,269 deaths, in California 16,466, confirmed cases and 391 deaths, 34 cases and 1 death in Merced County, and we can expect the number of cases to increase significantly should further action not being taken to decrease the spread of the disease.
3. Whereas there currently is no available vaccination or treatment for this illness, and despite community mitigation measures that decrease the likelihood of being exposed to the droplets of an infected person (including but not limited to restricting large scale events and mass gatherings, staying at home except for performing or receiving essential services, and practicing social distancing) the numbers of cases of this illness continue to increase at increasing rates.
4. Whereas aggressive containment operations including isolating suspect cases and persons under investigation and quarantining their contacts (critical to reducing the spread of the disease and reducing the impacts of the disease on society) are soon to be exceeded in this County.
5. Whereas within the public health system, every person who meets the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) criteria for disease within Merced County has been and will be tested, there are both locally and nationally limited testing capabilities due to availability and number of laboratory test kits and specimen collection kits.
6. Effective, Tuesday, April 7, 2020, the following will be in effect for Merced County.
 - a. Health Care Providers shall:
 - i. On a daily basis report to the Merced County Public Health Department the number of patients seen in their practice with a febrile respiratory illness and the number of those patients tested for COVID-19 AND
 - ii. Direct those patients without an exclusionary diagnosis to isolate him/herself for-seven days after onset of symptoms or for three days after cessation of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications (whichever is longer) AND to notify all close contacts to quarantine themselves for 14 days from the last known contact with the patient.
 - b. All Employers shall:
 - i. On a daily basis, while conducting business, screen all employees for febrile respiratory illness;

- ii. Exclude from work all employees that report symptoms of febrile respiratory illness for seven days from the day that they are identified as having symptoms; and
 - iii. Direct employees excluded from work to isolate at home for at least seven days ,AND to notify all close contacts to quarantine themselves for 14 days from the last known contact with the patient.
 - c. All Residents shall:
 - i. Self-monitor for signs and symptoms of COVID-19; and
 - ii. Isolate themselves if they have signs and symptoms for seven days after onset of symptoms, unless they should require further medical attention, AND notify their close contacts to quarantine for 14 days.
 - d. All residents are strongly encouraged to wear a cloth face covering whenever they must be out of the home to reduce the spread of the illness from infected individuals that have no symptoms. **This is in addition to the continued requirement of at least 6 feet of social distancing.**
- 6. For the purpose of this order:
 - a. Febrile respiratory illness is defined as "a new or worsening episode of either cough or shortness of breath, presenting with fever (temperature 38 degrees C or 100.4 degrees or higher) or chills in the previous 24 hours;"
 - b. Close contact is defined as someone who has spent 15 minutes or more time within 6 feet or less of the person;
 - c. Isolation is defined as "separation of sick people with a contagious disease from people who are not sick;"
 - d. Quarantine is defined as "separation and restricting the movement of people who were exposed to a contagious disease during the illness incubation period."
 - e. Social distancing is defined as "maintain a six-foot separation from all persons except for family members;" and
 - f. Symptoms of COVID-19:
 - i. Fever
 - ii. Cough
 - iii. Shortness of breath
 - g. Cloth face covering is defined as any cloth that can be used to cover as tightly as possible the mouth and nose of the wearer. It is NOT a surgical mask or respirator (which must be reserved for health care professionals in their work treating COVID-19 patients). It should be washed at least daily and the wearer should wash their hands before putting it on and after taking it off. Additionally, the wearer should avoid touching the covering as much as possible while wearing it.
- 7. The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) may recommend further guidance.

I, as Interim Health Officer for the County of Merced, encourage voluntary compliance with this Health Officer's Order. However, violation of this order is subject to fine, imprisonments or both (California Health and Safety Code Section 120295.)



Kenneth Bird, MD, MPH
Interim Health Officer