

Joint Information Release



Intergovernmental Public Advisory Regarding Masks in Blount County

July 8, 2020

Maryville, Tennessee – Blount County, Maryville and Alcoa officials ask citizens to do their part to slow the spread of the COVID-19 Coronavirus in the community. Blount County government leaders urge citizens to do the necessary things – including wearing masks in public – to protect each other.

According to the CDC and other health experts, wearing masks is a significant way to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Airborne virus particles traveling through a mask are minimized and distance spread is shortened. Additionally, social distancing, frequent handwashing, and cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces are the best ways to keep from spreading the virus. [Information from the CDC on prevention can be found here.](#)

In response to the [Governor's Executive Order Number 54](#) issued July 3, urging people to wear face coverings in public places, and "providing local governments with authority concerning face coverings," local government leaders of Blount County convened to discuss the Order and its implications. While the Order apparently delegates the authority of "mask mandates" to the 89 county mayors of Tennessee, questions remain as to the guidelines on enforcement or legal implications posed to counties who do mandate masks for the public. According to the Order, Tennessee cities within the 89 counties would fall under the county mayors' jurisdiction. The County has the Order under legal advisement to understand the best way to proceed.

"We have no plans at this time to issue a mask mandate, but now is not the time to return to normal activity. In order to keep from having additional impacts on our economy, we must do everything we can as individuals to protect the community," said Blount County Mayor Ed Mitchell

Officials have expressed serious concern about the increase in numbers of positive COVID-19 cases in the south, but specifically in Blount County, as well as neighboring counties that have been determined "hotspots." The past two weeks have shown a significant spike in cases and an increase in hospitalizations in Blount County.

City of Alcoa City Manager Mark Johnson agreed, "In order to manage this upward trend of cases in our community and keep our economy open, we all need to do our part to slow the spread of this virus. We have a lot of data to support the need for our citizens to wear masks and strongly encourage them to do so."

Officials are continually monitoring the evolving situation and are in contact with health and hospital authorities. As of July 7, 2020, the number of active cases in Blount County is 118 (.09% of the population) out of 262 total cases (.19% of the population). 141 patients have recovered or were not symptomatic. Three people have died from COVID-19 related complications. There have been 15 hospitalizations. With the recent increases, 33 occurring over one day, it is more imperative than ever for people to take actions to protect themselves, their family and neighbors from the spread of this virus.

City of Maryville Mayor Tom Taylor said, "Wearing a mask is a way that we can look out for each other and it is frankly an economic necessity. If we don't wear the masks, we are going to have significant setbacks. I hope people understand the significance of what that means – we have to look out for our economy, and each other."

The fluid nature of the COVID-19 crisis requires the need to re-evaluate constantly. More information will be available as it progresses. To help keep our community informed, [this site](#) has been established for the public to find contact information for local governments, schools and public facilities. News and information will also be distributed through our local media outlets.

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