

Mayor's Monthly Message: April 2020

We are in an unprecedented time and each day we are exposed to new information related to the COVID-19 virus. The confusion and uncertainty surrounding the disease can certainly be unsettling. First and foremost, our thoughts are with those around the world who've been impacted by the virus. Thus far, the COVID-19 virus has not been detected in in Florence.

The Town of Florence team is on top of all the recent developments and the fluidity of the situation, to be honest, things are changing hourly. Due to the global nature of the issue, this is bigger and all of us, as individuals. Trust that you have an experienced team with decades of experience coordinating local emergency response. Staff is constantly being briefed from a number of angles and is coordinating with state, county and local medical professionals daily. The State of Arizona has declared an emergency and the Pinal County Public Health District has activated their Incident Command Center (ICC) and is taking the lead on the response to the COVID-19 Virus in Pinal County.

Town staff has been in constant communication with leadership from Mountain Vista Medical Center, the operator of the Florence Anthem Hospital. Mountain Vista has been very supportive and desires to make sure that they provide the best community support possible. Town Staff was recently made aware that Mountain Vista will be erecting a tent at the Florence Anthem Hospital this week for COVID-19 screening. Hospitals throughout the United States set up tents as a method to prescreen patients and limit contagion in the main facility, this is not unique to Florence. We thank Mountain Vista for their partnership and well thought out response.

Sunday the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) updated their guidance to include " no gatherings of 50 or people or more" including weddings, festivals, parades, concerts, sporting events or conferences be held in the United States for the next eight weeks. This recommendation was made in an attempt to reduce introduction of the virus into new communities and to slow the spread of infection in communities already affected by the virus. This recommendation clearly affects the way that the Town does business and the services that we provide. Out of an abundance of caution and to support other preventative measures that are underway, the Town of Florence will make the following adjustments to our operations:

Town wide facility and program updates:

- The Town is cancelling all special events through the end of April. This will include POWWOW, Eggstravaganza, Road to Country Thunder, and Movie in the Park.

- Town representatives have also reached out to the organizers of Country Thunder, Gallagher Softball Tournament, Third Fridays on Main, and the upcoming Rail 3 Ranch Rodeo to make them aware of the CDC guidance.
- The Town is cancelling all Recreation, Active Adult Center, and Library programming until Monday March 30th.
- Due to the nature of the activities performed at the Fitness Center, and our customer base, the Fitness Center is being closed until further notice.
- The Give A Lift Program is being suspended at this time, as the program depends on volunteer drivers.
- The Medical Equipment Loan Program will continue to be offered but patrons will need to contact Community Services staff at **(520) 868-7040** to arrange for pickup and drop-off.
- Due to the updated CDC guidelines, and the nature of program participants, closing the Florence Active Adult Center is imperative. Getting seniors meals is a top priority, therefore we will continue the Meals on Wheels Program and are working to provide meals for pickup at the Active Adult Center, instead of hosting meals at the facility.
- Consistent with the Maricopa County Library District and several Pinal County Libraries, the Florence Library will be closed on Wednesday March 18th, until further notice.
- All room reservations at the Florence Community Center and facility rentals are suspended at this time.
- All Town parks will remain open. Park restrooms will remain open and will receive cleaning and supply service as resources allow.
- There are currently no plans to suspend the Intersession and After School Programs sponsored by the Town. Protocols are being put in place and partnerships are being researched to be sure that we can meet the community need.

While Town facilities are cleaned and maintained on a regular basis, we encourage residents to remember, the best way to reduce the risk of getting sick and to avoid COVID-19:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

Other things to be aware of:

- If citizens are not feeling well or believe that they are showing symptoms of the COVID-19 Virus, do not go to Town of Florence Fire Stations for diagnosis or treatment. Fire Stations are not equipped for testing or treatment of COVID-19. Mountain Vista Medical Center will be putting protocols in place for diagnosis and testing at the Florence Anthem Hospital this week. As an additional resource, the Arizona Poison Control System is now available to take COVID-19 calls from Arizona providers and the general public at **1-(844)-542-8201**.
- The Town of Florence has suspended all volunteer programs. This will affect the Florence Police Department, Florence Fire Department, and Community Services Department.
- The Municipal Court is still planning to move forward as scheduled. The Florence Municipal Court will be subject to any State Supreme Court decisions going forward.
- Although no decision has been made at this time, the Florence Town Council may hold remote meetings through technologic means and may limit the public involvement, as necessary. This would mean cancelling all public hearings and removing Call to the Public from the agenda.
- Effective immediately, all board, commission, committee, and taskforce meetings are cancelled until further notice.

The Town of Florence is working closely with Arizona Department of Health Services, Pinal County Department of Public Health, regional public safety agencies, and the Centers for Disease Control in disseminating information on the coronavirus, how it spreads and to protect yourself and family from the virus. Additionally, Town departments are following established protocol and using appropriate precautionary measures in providing services to our residents and businesses.

What you should know about the Coronavirus:

STAY CALM: There have been a limited number of cases identified so far in Maricopa County. Avoiding widespread panic and fear is essential to limiting the negative effects of a possible outbreak.

KNOW THE SYMPTOMS: Symptoms include fever, cough, shortness of breath, and other flu-like symptoms. Seek medical attention if you experience similar or prolonged symptoms.

PLAN AHEAD: Have extra food, water, medical supplies, and emergency kits in your homes and offices. Talk to your family, friends, and neighbors to develop emergency plans.

TAKE PRECAUTIONS: Avoid contact with sick individuals, refrain from traveling to areas with high rates of infection, and stay home if you are feeling ill.

SANITIZE: Wash your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds and use disinfectant cleaning products to wipe down surfaces or objects.

STEPS TO PREVENT ILLNESS: There is currently no vaccine to prevent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus.

The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person.

- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
- Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.

INFORMING CHILDREN ABOUT COVID-19: Remain calm and reassuring, remember that children will react to both what you say and how you say it. Avoid language that might blame others and lead to stigma. Remember that viruses can make anyone sick, regardless of a person's race or ethnicity. Pay attention to what children see or hear on television, radio, or online and provide information that is honest and accurate. Teach children everyday actions to reduce the spread of germs.

Additional Information:

- Scams are being taken in multiple forms during the COVID-19 pandemic. Government officials are seeing many fake testing kits, medicine, treatments, and "cures", E-mail and phone phishing, crowdfunding fraud, and PPE scams. For more information, visit: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TdVIJRFO_Q&feature=youtu.be

- President Trump’s guidelines on opening up America again. Governor Ducey has communicated that he will follow the President’s lead, when it comes to reopening Arizona. For more information, visit: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/openingamerica>
- Public assistance program and policy guide. For more information, visit: https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1525468328389-4a038bbef9081cd7dfe7538e7751aa9c/PAPPG_3.1_508_FINAL_5-4-2018.pdf
- 3-1-1 is the Pinal County Information Line for general public and workplace questions
- The Arizona Poison Control System is available to answer questions about COVID-19 from Arizona providers (for testing and patient guidance) and the general public (for testing, isolation, and quarantine guidance) at 1-844-542-8201.

Links:

- Arizona DHS COVID-19 Homepage: Your go-to resource for Arizona-specific public health guidance (<https://azdhs.gov/index.php>).
- Arizona Together Initiative: Connect individuals and businesses to resources, raising money for community organizations and providing information on volunteer opportunities (www.ArizonaTogether.org)
- 2-1-1 is the State’s COVID-19 hotline: Information for any Arizonan about COVID-19 is available by dialing 2-1-1. Callers will be able to talk to a live operator during business hours.
- Center for Disease Control Homepage: Latest from federal officials: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- Arizona-Specific Worker and Small Business Resources: the Arizona Commerce Authority has compiled resources for small businesses and workers facing employment loss on this page (www.azcommerce.com/covid19)