

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Residents Urged to Exercise COVID-19 Precautions Over Holiday Weekend

MERCED COUNTY, CA—With data from prior holiday weekends showing spikes of COVID-19 cases, residents are strongly advised to avoid mass gatherings, wear masks, and exercise good hand hygiene over the Fourth of July weekend.

This holiday weekend comes at a critical juncture for Merced County. Rapidly increasing cases of COVID-19 coupled with increased hospitalizations and a greater percentage of people testing positive for the disease has resulted in Merced County being placed on a State monitoring list and the closure of bars, indoor dining and other entertainment venues for an expected minimum of three weeks. If numbers continue to rise, that closure timeframe could be extended by the State and additional business sectors could be closed. If numbers trend downward in the coming days, the three-week closure could potentially be reduced.

As evidenced by the table below, holiday weekends have significantly contributed to the rise in cases due to large family gatherings, a lack of physical distancing, and an absence of masks or face coverings:

Holiday	Total Cases	14 days out Date	Total Cases	Number of New Cases	Percent Increase
Mother's Day 5/10	169	5/24/2020	261	92	54%
Memorial Day 5/25	268	6/8/2020	367	119	44%
Father's Day 6/21	616	7/2/2020	1131	515	96%

If the upcoming holiday weekend results in another rise in cases, Merced County will be at severe risk for an extended shutdown of various parts of the economy.

This extended shutdown can be prevented by avoiding crowds or large family gatherings, practicing physical distancing, washing your hands often with soap and water, staying home if you're sick, and wearing face coverings when:

- Inside of, or in line to enter, any indoor public space;
- Obtaining healthcare services;
- Waiting for or riding on public transportation or while in any private or ride-sharing vehicle including operators of the transportation;
- At the workplace or performing work off-site;
- Outdoors in public spaces where physical distancing is not possible.

Face coverings are a proven way to reduce the spread of COVID-19, said Dr. Salvador Sandoval, Merced County's Public Health Officer.

"Face coverings protect those around you from respiratory droplets when you cough, sneeze or talk," Dr. Sandoval said. "This is a deadly disease that spreads rapidly. Also, it affects people differently—you could be positive for COVID-19, but not have any symptoms. That's why it's essential for everyone to wear face coverings over their nose and mouth when in public."

For more information on COVID-19, please visit Merced County Department of Public Health's resource website at www.countyofmerced.com/coronavirus.

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