



January 2021 Pathfinder

"Please make the right choices."

Dr. Henning Ansoerg, Santa Barbara County Public Health Officer

Teamwork Matters

A message from
the City Manager
Jason Stilwell



We all share hope that daily life will slowly return to normal. As we enter into the new year and mass vaccinations begin, the light at the end of the tunnel may be longer than previously thought. We are in for a very difficult next few weeks. Unfortunately, we cannot stop what is to come in the immediate future, but we can impact the longer-term trajectory of this virus spread.

COVID-19 in Santa Barbara County is at record high levels. The case rate, number of new daily cases, testing positivity, active cases, and hospitalizations are all the highest we have ever experienced during the course of this pandemic. We have coworkers out sick in every department but adherence to safety plans is avoiding any spreading at our worksites...be familiar with the safety plans and be safe!

Further, the rate of increase of these metrics is approaching exponential growth. Infections are spiking, a potentially more contagious strain has arrived, and because Intensive Care Unit (ICU) capacity is dangerously low most Californians will remain under stay-at-home orders for the foreseeable future. There are more than 2 million infections in California, 21 million nationally, and globally more than 86 million people have contracted the virus.

This pandemic presents a test of our collective will. I remain confident that we will pass this challenge. Last year, we successfully transitioned to more customer service via phones, online, and innovative outreach. In the coming weeks and months, we plan to reopen all of our departments' remodeled public counters. We also will be revising all department safety plans no later than the end of January.

Stay home, wear a mask if you must leave for essential tasks, isolate immediately if you are sick, and please do not gather with those outside your home.

As we move further into COVID-19 vaccine distribution, we come closer and closer to being out of this pandemic. Our most at-risk health care givers will soon be protected from this virus. The County Public Health Department is organizing vaccinations. The vaccination Phases and Tiers within the Phases are still in flux as the availability of vaccine is still limited.

We acknowledge there are many questions about the vaccines, including media reports about people including first responders who hesitate or refuse vaccinations. We all look forward to learning more answers from the health authorities. Initially, there are limited doses available. Based on local epidemiology and implementation considerations, first to be vaccinated are frontline essential workers and older persons with high-risk conditions. As a larger number of doses becomes available, they will be available to more people.

Let's also support our local businesses. I hope that you understand the power of buying local as much as possible, because those dollars get funneled back into our community. More than ever, our local shops and restaurants need your patronage to stay afloat, amid being burdened by lockdowns. You probably know of locally-owned businesses in your neighborhood that have closed. While everyone is encouraged to be safe, patronizing local businesses could help them hang on. I hope that we will have a rebuilding of all the wonderful things in our community this year.

Jason