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**NEWS
RELEASE**

COVID-19 Update

04 / 17 / 2020

State Parks in El Paso to remain CLOSED

EL PASO, Texas—The City of El Paso Public Health Department is reporting **31** new COVID-19 cases bringing the county's total number to **482**, the number of deaths remains at **seven (7)**.

Positive cases in El Paso County include 248 females and 234 males; see accompanying graphics and map. There are now 38 patients hospitalized, and 11 of those are currently in ICU.

City and County officials are reviewing the federal and state executive orders to determine what amendments, if any, will need to be made to the local orders.

"The Governor's steps to reopen the State provides hope that we will move forward from this pandemic," said Mayor Dee Margo. "However, the reopening of El Paso is contingent on the rate of infection and residents complying with the current Stay Home Order. Until we see a consistent decrease in our positive cases, we will not be ready to lift restrictions."

While Governor Greg Abbott's executive order would allow most state parks in Texas to reopen on Monday, April 20, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department has advised that Franklin Mountain State Park and Hueco Tanks State Park will remain closed until further notice due in part to the local COVID-19 trends. The closure of the local State Parks will also reduce the high risk of individuals getting lost or injured that would require the Fire Department's Search and Rescue Operations to respond to possible mountain rescues, diverting critically needed first responders from the COVID-19 mission.

"State leadership understands that El Paso County continues to see an increase in cases that cannot be ignored," said Dr. Hector Ocaranza, City/County Health Authority. "Reducing the number of cases locally rest in each and every one of our community residents' hands and will require all of us to follow the Stay Home Order more closely and adhering to social distancing measures. Only then, will some of the restrictions in El Paso be lifted."

In addition to abiding by the Stay Home, Work Safe orders and avoiding any gatherings with anyone outside a person's immediate household, public health officials continue to urge residents to use face coverings when out performing essential duties or tasks. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advises the use of simple cloth masks to slow the spread of the virus and help people who may have the virus and do not know it from transmitting it to others. (see: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>)

It is also recommended that the face coverings be cleaned at least daily. A washing machine should suffice in properly washing a face covering. Individuals should be careful not to touch their eyes, nose, and mouth when removing their face covering and wash hands immediately after removing.

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