



## Governor Northam's Briefing: Tuesday, July 14, 2020

### ***COVID-19 Today in Virginia:***

- **72,443 total cases**, 6,817 total hospitalizations (confirmed COVID and currently hospitalized 707) and **1,977 total deaths**.
- **Tests conducted:** 828,017 total PCR tests conducted, more than 17,000 daily now; 6.9% positivity (PCR only), trending upward in the Eastern Region (Hampton Roads).

### ***Top Takeaways:***

- Eastern Region (Hampton Roads) number of daily cases is 346 today, up from about 60 in May/June
  - **Age group 20-29-year-olds up 250%** in Eastern region
- Taking action today to head this off. Step one is **stronger enforcement for non-compliance of mask and social distancing rules**.
- We're **now testing more than 17,000** (PCR tests) a day, percent positivity has been inching up from 5.9 to 6.8%.

### ***Governor:***

Update Virginians about where we are with COVID-19:

- Recap – When this began, we issued a stay at home order, indoor mask requirements, etc., and most people have been careful and responsible.
  - Overall, these strategies have worked. Virginia is not seeing the spikes like some other states are experiencing.
- However, there has been an increase in the number of cases, especially in Hampton Roads.
  - Remind citizens that we're in this for the long haul. We need to keep our numbers low and our citizens healthy.
  - When you look at the last 7-day trend, cases are going up, as is the percentage of positivity, especially in the Eastern region.
- We're now testing more than 17,000 a day
- Percent positivity has been inching up from 5.9 to 6.8
  - Good number and want to keep it that way
  - Regional numbers:
    - NoVa is home to 2/3 of Virginia's population, currently at 6.7% positivity
    - SW region 4.8%
    - NW region 5.9%
    - Eastern Region much different: 346 cases now up from about 60 in May/June
    - Age group 20-29-year-olds up 250% in Eastern region!
- Virginia borders five other states, so we don't live in a bubble.
- Taking action today to head this off. Step one is **stronger enforcement for non-compliance of mask and social distancing rules**.

- **Health District Directors** reminded that they can enforce the mask rule indoors.
  - Unannounced visits by inspectors will be conducted ASAP on all businesses, focused especially in Hampton Roads area
- **Your business license is on the line** if you don't enforce the mask rule. **NO SHIRT, NO SHOES, NO MASK, NO SERVICE.**
- Tell patrons to **mask up or leave**. If they don't, call the police, they are trespassing.
- Update Beach plans and make sure those mayors are enforcing restrictions.
  - Other actions that could be taken are:
    - Earlier cutoff of alcohol sales
    - Reduction in size of gatherings allowed
    - All of you non compliers, we need to move forward safely!

### **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Update:**

- Virginia is still getting orders and distributing them throughout the state.
  - As of yesterday, have received and distributed 49 shipments.
- Private market is not always predictable, but we feel we will have enough.

### **HOW TO SEND KIDS BACK TO SCHOOL?**

- Hard to balance what is best for children's education and their safety and the well-being of teachers/support staff
- One size doesn't fit all, so local leaders are making those decisions
  - In much of rural Virginia it may be safe to go back to school 4-5 days a week, but not in others
  - SCHEV is reviewing opening plans for higher education
  - **PreK-12 and colleges must stay aware of cases in their areas and make best decisions** about what to do based on that data.

### **Housing/Unemployment Support**

- \$50 Million in CARES Act federal funding has been available for 9 business days now and they have already served 310 households, helping pay rent or mortgage and 500 more have been approved. We want people to stay in their homes during this time.
- Since March, 938,559 Virginians applied for unemployment and 91% have been paid
  - With the economy reopening, many are going back to work
- July 28 state is having a virtual hiring event, more on that later.

### **Update on DMV**

- Locations are opening slowly, have had 533,000 appointments
- Schedule 7,000 appointments per day
- The 90-day extension for expiration of licenses and registrations through October

### **National Guard**

- Thankful that they have been testing and helping Commonwealth in other ways
- Title 32 status will end soon, and Governor has asked federal government to extend through end of 2020.

## Special Session

- Talking with legislators about timing and a date will be announced soon.

**Virginia has come a long way since the beginning of this pandemic. When you compare us with other states, we are doing well. But clearly COVID hasn't gone away. Stay vigilant keep masking, washing hands, keep social distancing. Stay away from others.**

## **Dr. Oliver:**

- Can look at COVID-19 data anytime on our website: [VDH.virginia.gov](https://vdh.virginia.gov)
- Overwhelming number in Commonwealth have been doing the right thing, however, there has been a number not doing the right thing
- Our Environmental Health Inspectors will be looking for those who aren't following rules.
  - VDH has 500 now, and is adding another 100 or so to prevent the spread in our community.
- Younger people should not let their guard down in order to protect the community.
  - Other people can get it from you before you feel sick!
- Regional Data is now available on the VDH website so you can follow the numbers near you.

## Q&A

Q: Is this your warning shot to folks in Virginia?

A: Most people in Virginia are doing the right thing, but Virginians need to realize that we can't go back. We all need to do the right thing, follow the rules to get this health crisis behind us. Everybody must cooperate.

Q: Previously set a goal of testing residents and staff of all nursing homes by tomorrow? Will that be met? Have enough workers been hired to do that?

A: Dr. Forlano: Nursing homes to date, have tested 204 of the 280, with 58 more scheduled, so by July 23 should be all done. Weekly ongoing testing of nursing homes employees only if there are positive cases. If those aren't there, then testing will cease.

Q: Unemployment application and payment progress?

A: Meagan Healey: We have Increased our staff by 50% and now take 60,000 calls weekly. Around 20% who applied aren't eligible.

Q: Unemployment appeals process takes months?

A: Meagan Healey: 80,000 people in appeals process currently. We are working with DOLI to work on workplace safety as well.

Q: Explain how masking mandate will be enforced? Citing individuals?

A: Several avenues to look at as far as individuals not wearing masks in indoors areas, is it a Class I Misdemeanor. We are not looking to prosecute people for not wearing masks, but are trying to encourage folks to follow the guidelines.

Q: Putting onus of responsibility on businesses. How about closing beaches, etc. in HR?

A: Numbers are increasing in gatherings mostly around bars. If people don't abide by guidelines for those and house parties, we will lower the limit of numbers gathering. From current 250 down to 50. Following percent positivity closely and will do more testing and tracing in hotspots. Right now, it's in Hampton Roads.

Q: Benchmarks? Timeline?

A: Following a lot of metrics, one of those is the hospital capacity. Percent positivity and death rate as well.

Q: If the surge in Hampton Roads makes you more concerned, will you go back to Phase II?

A: Comparing the Hampton Roads data to NoVa, makes NoVa look good, as well as MD and DC. Things are fluid, they change daily, and we are constantly evaluating and analyzing the data.

Q: Would you rollback regionally if necessary?

A: Yes, we made statewide guidelines, but now it's about mitigation, so in certain areas that could happen. We think about this every day, as we've gone through this process, we continue to hope for a vaccine and the heat to kill it, but it hasn't. The only thing to slow this virus down is us.

Q: Considering Phased openings, how about the schools? It could be patchwork around the state?

A: We will do it safely and responsibly. One size reopening doesn't fit all. For instance, in the Southwest easier to accomplish small class sizes, but it's about everyone feeling safe. Every school district, as well as colleges/universities are all different environments.

Q: Spread in workplace is also happening now. What can be done about that?

A: Social Distancing, increased cleaning of high contact areas, teleworking when possible, all help.

Q: Ease restrictions on to increase transparency so we can see areas where it is bad?

A: Dr. Oliver: The release of detailed outbreak information is motivated by health needs. In cases of the meat processing plants and other congregant settings, we only release the outbreak information when it could benefit the public health. In fact, for example a restaurant or a plant, releasing information about that may or may not promote public safety.

Q: This has hit the Latinx community hard, have you hired more bilingual contact tracers?

A: We are working on that and hoping that all people can get information they can understand. We are concerned about the Spanish-speaking community and many who speak Asian languages in NoVa. We would like to get folks with those language abilities and are looking to hire more of them.

Q: Have business owners been given standards for having employees travel and come back to work, guidelines how to handle that?

A: Testing and quarantine, no specific guidelines for that.

Q: Folks living w/o transportation or air conditioning, can CARES Act money provide relief for them?

A: CARES Act funding must be used specifically for C-19 related issues. The money is supposed to be used for those. Go to the Health Department or other community support for more details. Universal Broadband CARES money can be used for that. Telehealth and education, virtual learning needs access to Broadband and childcare. We want to ensure that children will be educated in the fall. So much work has gone into planning for that, so all children have the best education possible.

**Will continue to get accurate detailed info out to Virginians as needed. Next press conference not yet scheduled.**