

Washington County, Texas Joint Information Center (JIC) Virtual Press Conference- 4-24-2020

Video location <https://youtu.be/bApr3iiepOg>

Dr. William Loesch, MD: So overall what's the state of the county, right now we're actually doing fairly well. I'll tell you there's a lot of concern because the cases seem to be going up. The good news is they're going up but there going up from one source we know where all the cases are at. It's an unfortunate situation that the nursing home here in town but cases in the county from community spread seem to be at least leveled off. We've got right now I think enough personal protective equipment for providers, the hospital is not overwhelmed and doesn't look like in the near future it's going to be overwhelmed.

Why don't we have any more testing?

I've gotten that question quite a bit you know this is a brand new virus we did not know anything about it prior to about four five months ago and we hadn't seen our first case but for about a month now, and so test don't just come out of thin air. It takes time to build up these things and the state is working very hard on it. I've been in touch with our state DSHS and with ours our state senator our local leaders everybody they're working on it as quick as we can. The ability to test is getting better and better every day and every week in this county. It's still not to the point we can just test anybody that walks in and wants it. So we are being judicious with the tests. We're opening new test sites actually in the state that can run the tests. I know Temple was at first the only place besides the state that could run it with us. Now we can do them in college station. We're very soon be able to do them here. The other test everybody keeps asking about his antibody testing and we're just now in the last two days able to start doing some limited antibody testing. Now, the system will get overwhelmed very quickly if we order on everybody and the test is not perfect yet it's going to take time to perfect these tests. All I can say is removing as best we can as fast as we can. Resources are limited and everybody, it's not just Brenham Texas, thats suffering from this its the entire world that is suffering from it so we're fighting as quick as we can to get these test kits available.

And then what can we do going forward as residents of Washington County?

You're gonna start hearing a lot of people saying it's time to start opening things up, and you know I'm I'm not only a doctor, I'm a citizen, so I understand we've got to get the economy moving again. We just need to be careful. Right now I think in Washington County and in Texas we're at least close to the peak if we haven't even maybe surpassed the peak the cases should hopefully start to be coming down with time and that means that we can very judiciously started considering opening up things. We can't go quickly back to normal, okay, in fact there's probably going to be a new normal for the foreseeable future. One thing everybody can do is wear a mask now masks like this surgical masks and cloth message you make at home. They're not necessarily to protect you they are to protect other people. Now if

everybody were to wear a mask right now the spread of this virus should be curtailed pretty significantly and so the more people that wear masks and the more people that stay at home when they don't need to be out the more people that that limit their travel the better off we're going to be. So we can't go back to normal yet but I think there's at least some hope on the horizon that life will slowly start to get back to normal.

Judge John Durrenberger: Hello Washington County friends. I'd like to start by saying Thank You to all of you that have unselfishly stepped up to help our community during this unprecedented time in history. We still face so many unknowns but seeing the impact you have had on each other lives and within our community brings so much hope and pride to be a part of Washington County.

As you know, in the very early days of this pandemic, we quickly established the Joint Information Center Task Force made up of various agencies including Washington County Emergency Management officials, City of Brenham, Chamber of Commerce, local school districts, Blinn, Baylor Scott and White, and so on. We knew we were in a time of fast-paced ever-changing information and needed an "all hands-on deck" effort. No one entity could manage this alone. This task force works 24/7 with hundreds of state and local partners to ensure the community is safe, has the appropriate health care requirements, stays informed, and is ready to reopen businesses when the time is right. And we are working on that now as we begin to implement Governor Abbott's ReOpen Texas phases. There will be more to come next week on how Washington County will move forward.

I understand there are many rumors, many questions, and many unknowns but we ask that you continue to trust the efforts of the task force and your elected officials. We realize you can't see all the behind the scenes efforts but know there are many working tirelessly to minimize the effects of COVID-19 on each and every individual, business, and within our community.

Your efforts to minimize the spread should also be commended and we sincerely thank you for doing your part. Washington County is a strong and resilient community. Let's keep the hope alive as we move forward in this together.

Mayor Milton Y. Tate, Jr.: Hello Brenham residents and Washington County friends. It has been a very trying time for all of us over the last several weeks but I'd like to say Thank You for all you have done to be so careful and attentive in helping to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in our community. We, as a community, have done well but also have quiet a ways to go.

As Judge Durrenberger mentioned, the Joint Information Center Task Force is a critical piece of our infrastructure right now in bridging the gap between many different agencies. As he stated, no one organization could do this alone. As we move forward, we continue to work on getting more testing,

ensuring our healthcare facilities are supported, and getting our businesses back to doing business. Our City employees continue to work hard at keeping daily operations and services running smoothly. We truly are all in this together.

The Judge and I will be providing regular video updates but we encourage you to continue going to the JIC website and the Washington County Office of Emergency Management Facebook page for the latest and most up to date information as these are updated daily.

I wish everyone a safe weekend and we look forward to talking with you again soon.

bit.ly/covidwctx

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