

http://www.sonomawest.com/the_windsor_times/news/hospitals-prepare-for-surge-in-virus-cases/article_33406c7a-7530-11ea-b753-e38d94088c9f.html

FEATURED

Hospitals prepare for surge in virus cases

By Rollie Atkinson, Sonoma West Staff

Apr 2, 2020



Healdsburg District Hospital on March 30.

Photo Rollie Atkinson

Sonoma County residents are being told to expect a rising wave of COVID-19 infection cases over the coming weeks, while local public health officials and hospitals prepare for the worst. That involves the county's six acute care hospitals and numerous community health clinics scrambling to find spaces for hundreds of extra patient beds. Inventories of PPDs (personal protection devices), COVID-19 test kits and life-saving ventilators are being assembled. What that future COVID-19 "surge"

will look like will depend on hundreds, if not thousands, of individual vantage points.

The county's healthcare providers will become the first line of defense, assuming the roles of firefighters during the 2017 Tubbs and 2019 Kincade wildfires. SoCo Emergency will again be the central communication hub, but the most important phone number will be each person's local physician's office.

While Dr. Sundari Mase, the county's Public Health Officer, said enough COVID-19 test kits are available, not everyone may be allowed to be tested. Anyone feeling flu-like symptoms of dry coughing and a fever must first call their doctor to be approved for a test. Positive tests may result in self-quarantine or hospitalization in more extreme cases or with people with underlying health concerns. From statistics Tuesday evening, 1,688 tests had been completed and 71 active cases remained after one fatality and 13 recoveries. Mase said those numbers are just the beginning of what is to come. Persons without a primary doctor should call the county's "warm line" at 2-1-1.

Sonoma County has a population of 500,000 people and assorted epidemiology models predict a 20-40% infection rate. That could mean anywhere from 100,000 to 200,000 local people could contract the coronavirus that causes COVID-19. If all the shelter-in-place practices and social distancing fail to slow the disease's spread, the county could experience hundreds of deaths. But none of these numbers are yet to be based on confirmed statistics — that is why all plans continue to be based on the "worst case" scenario.

So far, the nine-county region of the San Francisco Bay is faring much better than almost all other parts of the country. Through Tuesday, there were 1,400 active COVID-19 cases reported and 54 deaths. California had 8,558 cases and 186 deaths as of Wednesday morning, according to Johns Hopkins University Center for Health Security. While the nationwide curve is projected to peak on April 15, California is expected to hit peak case totals on April 26, according to one scenario being reported from Gov. Gavin Newsom's office.

Sonoma County's emergency medical services agency has set a goal to identify and

have in place an additional 500 hospital beds. Some of these beds could be located in vacant school dormitories and hotels. These Alternative Care Sites (ACS) would be used for non-critical and non-COVID-19 patients and for positive test cases that need to be isolated from family members at home.

Currently, the county has 736 licensed hospital beds, which includes 76 Intensive Care Unit beds and pressurized rooms. The goal is to have the 500 additional beds as fast as possible.

All county hospitals are canceling all elective surgeries and healthcare procedures to keep extra beds available for the expected surge.

At Healdsburg District Hospital, which has 42 licensed beds, including four ICU beds, CEO Joe Harrington said “surge planning” has identified spaces for extra beds and “triage” tents have been erected at the exterior entrance to the hospital’s emergency room.

“We are concentrating on our interior communications,” said Gina Fabiano, communications director for the hospital. This has included daily manager “huddles” and weekly full-staff update reports.

“We learned a lot from the Tubbs and Kincade fires,” said Harrington.

He said a local bed and breakfast inn and the Trio Hotel have offered reduced-cost lodging to local caregivers, if needed.

The hospital is maintaining a website page dedicated to the latest news on the COVID-19 pandemic and a guide for local patient and caregiver updates. Kristina Holloway, the hospital’s human resource manager, has coordinated childcare services at nearby Healdsburg Community Church for hospital employees while local schools remain closed. Hospital employees are staffing the center and parents must provide meals for their own children. Children are being screened every morning for virus-like symptoms.

—