



BERTIE COUNTY
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 16, 2020

Bertie County notes rural advantage against COVID-19 pandemic

Response continues, County encourages phone or electronic transactions to conduct County business

WINDSOR, N.C. – County leaders and community partners met here today to discuss the continued spread of COVID-19. According to Johns Hopkins University, over 178,000 cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed resulting in just over 7,000 deaths worldwide. Of the confirmed cases, there are approximately 78,000 people recovering from the virus, mostly in China, the epicenter of the pandemic.

However, there are no suspected cases of the virus here.

“The fact that we are so rural here in Bertie County gives us an edge. We are not like Raleigh as it relates to population. We are unlike the major cities, and it does put us at an advantage. This is simply a time for concern not panic,” Emergency Services Director, Mitch Cooper, said today.

Mr. Cooper noted that it was still important for all members of Bertie County to stay cautious and heed warnings set forth by North Carolina Governor, Roy Cooper.

“What we do have though is one of the fastest growing aging populations in North Carolina, and it takes all of us, working together, to protect them, and those with chronic respiratory conditions. Those who are immunosuppressed also stand most at risk for complications at the hands of this or any virus,” Director Cooper continued.

He noted that even though the virus has little potential at this time to drastically affect those who are otherwise healthy, the concern that it could be transmitted to members of the elderly or health compromised individuals is in the forefront of every public health officials’ mind.

At this time, no disruption in County operational hours is expected, however, the safety of County staff is paramount. We are asking that citizens consider the safety of our staff in light of this pandemic, and work to adhere to new guidelines for the foreseeable future.

Citizens are encouraged to conduct any needed county business online, by phone, or via drop box as much as possible to reduce the number of chances for infection of County staff *before, during, and after normal business hours*. Please be aware of the following:

- **Taxes** may be paid [online](#) at bertiecountytax.com, via [phone](#) (automated system) at 1-888-546-4220, [drop box](#), or remit payment to: PO Box 527, Windsor, NC 27983
 - Money orders are highly encouraged especially via drop box.
- **Water payments** may be paid [online](#) at co.bertie.nc.us/departments/pw/paywater.html, via [phone](#) (automated system) at 1-800-272-9829, [drop box](#), or remit payment to: PO Box 487, Windsor, NC 27983
 - Money order are highly encouraged especially via drop box.
- For citizen convenience, two (2) marked drop boxes are located just outside the main County Administration Building, 106 Dundee Street, Windsor, NC. One is denoted for tax payments and another for water bills.
- **If citizens are in need of Medicaid or food stamps applications, Bertie County Social Services can assist via phone and provide a packet for pick up if needed.** For these and all other program information, please contact Bertie County DSS at 794-5320.

To comply with Governor Coopers' recent mandates, and in the interest of public health, Bertie County is also implementing the following procedures today, March 16th:

- **Mandatory cancellation of all mass gatherings (100+ people)** – this includes the Board of Commissioners meeting that was due to be held tonight at 6:00 PM. All mass gatherings have been cancelled for at least two (2) weeks. There is currently no word if this mandate will be extended beyond the period of two (2) weeks. Out of an abundance of caution, most meetings not related to COVID-19 are being cancelled or postponed. If you are due to take part in a meeting with a County representative or official, please call that representative or official directly to inquire about the status of your meeting.
- **Mandatory closure of Bertie County Public Schools** – at this time, all NC public schools are closed until at least March 30, 2020 per state mandate. There is currently no word if this mandate will be extended beyond the period of two (2) weeks.
- **Adjustment to District and Superior Court Schedules** – District and Superior Court cases have been postponed for a period of at least 30 days. However, emergency hearings related to domestic violence, juveniles, and similar cases will still be heard. For specific questions about individual cases, visit www.nccourts.gov or call the Bertie County Clerk of Superior Court at 252-794-6800.
- **Adjustment to Bertie-Martin Regional Jail Visitation Policy** - Family/ministerial visitation of inmates has been suspended until further notice. Inmate visitation is limited to non-contact visits for attorneys, law enforcement officers, etc. All professional visits will be conducted in the visitation room.

- As of tomorrow, March 17, the **Bertie County Sheriff's Office** will not be utilizing finger printing equipment until further notice. Also, in order to ensure proper County law enforcement coverage, the Sheriff's Office will only respond to "unlock" vehicle calls in emergency situations (child or animal locked inside).
- All Bertie County nursing homes and rehabilitation centers are closed to visitors until further notice from Bertie County Emergency Management or other specified entity.
- **County Employee Travel** - Non-essential out-of-county travel for professional conferences and training is restricted until further notice for all county employees.
- **Senior Center Meals** – Dine in, congregate meal services have been suspended at all Bertie County Senior Nutrition Sites in the county. However, seniors are eligible to receive their meals for takeout or home delivery. For more information, contact the Bertie County Council on Aging Office at 794-5315.
- **County sponsored events/classes/trips** – Any and all County sponsored or supported events, classes, or field trips have been cancelled for a period of at least two (2) weeks.

Coronaviruses like COVID-19 are most often spread through the air by coughing or sneezing, through close personal contact (including touching or shaking hands), or through touching your nose, mouth, or eyes before washing your hands. In order to help prevent the spread of all infectious diseases, including COVID-19, take the following common-sense precautions:

- Wash hands frequently with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds at a time.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are ill; if you or a loved one is suspected to have COVID-19, please self-quarantine immediately, and contact your local Emergency or Health Department in advance of making a trip to those departments to minimize risk to others.
- If you or a loved one is **CONFIRMED** to have COVID-19, please have your entire household self-quarantine for a period of at least 14 days.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze to minimize risk to others. Then, dispose of the tissue properly.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces that are frequently touched such as computer monitors, keyboards, mouse/mouse pad, steering wheels, vehicle controls, remote controls, cell phones and cell phone cases, counter tops, etc.

Updates on COVID-19 are subject to change on an hourly basis. We ask that all citizens continue to maintain awareness about further updates from Bertie County and national media outlets.

For the most up to date information about the Coronavirus, please visit CDC.org, WHO.int, and NCDHHS.gov, as well as to “like” and follow all respective social media accounts, and the official Facebook page of Bertie County Government.

Media inquiries may be relayed to Emergency Services Director, Mitch Cooper, at 794-5302 or mitch.cooper@bertie.nc.gov.

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