



Erie County
Department of
Health



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

PRESS RELEASE

March 31, 2020, 1730 hours

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ERIE COUNTY UPDATE March 31, afternoon

ERIE COUNTY, NY – The Erie County Department of Health and Erie County are making the following announcements.

COVID-19 Data Update

As of 3/31 (12 p.m.), we have received reports of 499 total positive COVID-19 cases in Erie County residents. Eight Erie County residents have died, and 53 people have recovered. There are currently 438 people in isolation. As of the evening of March 30, 102 individuals with positive tests for COVID-19 were hospitalized in Erie County hospitals. Of those cases, 48 were in ICU beds.

Healthcare System Mobilization

Over the last several weeks, our local healthcare systems have been planning and preparing on all fronts for an expected surge in COVID-19 cases in our area. Actions like the conversion of St. Joseph's Hospital by Catholic Health into a COVID-19 facility and the establishment of a dedicated post-acute care unit for COVID-19 patients at Elderwood in Amherst are just some of the examples of steps being taken to make our local capacity match the anticipated demand for healthcare.

We appreciate all of the efforts from our partners in healthcare, law enforcement and emergency services during this unprecedented time.

Senior Services and Meal Delivery

Seniors in Erie County can contact our Department of Senior Services for Meals on Wheels delivery. Senior Services staff members are coordinating with Meals on Wheels to ensure meal delivery to all seniors in need. **There is a suggested donation for meal delivery, but do not let cost get in the way of asking for this help.** If you have concerns about not having enough food, call 716-858-8526 weekdays between 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

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9-1-1

ECDOH wants to remind all residents that 9-1-1 is an emergency service – not a help line or delivery service. Call or text 9-1-1 only for true emergencies. Examples of emergencies include:

- A fire
- A crime, especially if in progress
- A car crash, especially if someone is injured
- A medical emergency, especially symptoms that require immediate medical attention

Call your doctor for medical advice if you are feeling sick. The best medical advice for you comes from your own health care provider. Use 2-1-1 for free referrals to human and social service agencies, or basic needs.

Department of Parks, Recreation and Forestry Update

Erie County Commissioner of Parks, Recreation and Forestry Troy Schinzel joined Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz for today's live video briefing. "We want our parks to remain open as a safe space for our residents to enjoy responsibly," **said Commissioner Schinzel**. "But if they become too overcrowded and visitors aren't acting responsibly we may be forced to close them down to protect public health."

There are more than 10,000 acres in the Erie County Parks system across more than 40 areas, Erie County is encouraging residents to get outdoors to exercise and spend time with immediate household members.

Erie County Parks is offering the following suggestions and notifications about park usage and facility availability:

- If you arrive at a park and crowds are forming, choose a different park, a different trail, or return another time/day to visit.
- If parking lots are full, please do not park along roadsides or other undesignated areas. To protect your safety and that of others, please choose a different area to visit, or return another time or day when parking is available.
- Maintain distance from others while in places where people tend to congregate, such as parking lots, trailheads, and buildings.
- Do not litter or leave trash behind in our parks.
- As a general reminder, please be courteous to others at the parks. Have your dogs on leash at all times. Give people space when walking by. Be mindful of vehicle traffic on opens roads and move to the shoulder while walking.
- If you or a family member isn't feeling well, **PLEASE STAY HOME**. If you are elderly or have some other underlying condition making you more susceptible to sickness, **PLEASE STAY HOME**.
- We are in constant communication with our counterparts at town, city, NYS and other state parks to find out what they are doing, what is working or not, so that we can try to be as universal in Park rules as possible.
- You can find other Erie County Parks with our Parks Finder at www.erie.gov/parklocator

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Closures and Limitations

- Please consider not visiting the Eternal Flame at Chestnut Ridge or the Falls at Akron Falls. They are narrow trails that are experiencing a lot of foot traffic and you cannot practice proper distancing. They are both still going to be there this summer after we've made it through the peak. Please consider saving your visit for then.
- If you still choose to visit our parks, all buildings are closed and rentals have been cancelled through April 26.
- There are also limited bathroom facilities and portable toilets available. This is to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 but also because many of the facilities are not heated and haven't yet been opened for the season.
- Playgrounds at all of our parks are closed. Please do not allow your children to use them and if they do please sanitize their hands immediately after contact with frequently touched surfaces.
- Disc Golf at Como Lake, Ellicott, Emery and Chestnut Ridge will also be closed until further notice. Too many people have been playing attracting larger groups than are safe and there is no way for us to ensure baskets being touched by hundreds of people a day are sanitized.
- Our golf courses are also closed but they ordinarily would not be available at this point in the year. As we get closer to the regular opening dates we'll revisit.
- The Ellicott Creek Island Bark Park is also closed seasonally because of the melt and wet spring conditions and opening will be revisited as we move forward. Black Rock Canal Bark Park is also closed.
- Basketball courts have been closed and rims have been removed.
- Tennis will remain open but only to singles among immediate family members. When playing, please exercise distancing of at least 6 feet, especially related to adjacent courts. And remember to wash or sanitize your hands immediately after handling common surfaces like the gate latches or tennis balls.

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- **Erie County Department of Health, COVID-19 Information Line:** (716) 858-2929 – 8 a.m. – 8 p.m.
- **Erie County Department of Health, COVID-19:** <http://www.erie.gov/covid19>
- **Erie County online map of confirmed cases:** www.erie.gov/covidmap
- **New York State Department of Health Hotline:** (888) 364-3065

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