The City of Vernon’s Department of Health and Environmental Control (HECD) continues its critical work to proactively protect public health during the pandemic of COVID-19. In support of federal, state, and local agencies and public health officials, the HECD disseminates information, provides phone consultation, and conducts site visits at facilities located in Vernon to ensure compliance with current COVID-19 guidelines, while working in close collaboration with other agencies including the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, Cal OSHA and the USDA where necessary. To mitigate the potential for off-worksite community spread, the City is planning to launch a “Safe at Work & Safe at Home” public health education initiative. This proposed effort would leverage community partnerships to encourage public health safety practices on-the-job while strongly urging Vernon workers to maintain those sound practices away from the job.

**Highlights**

**Proactive Communications**

- Since January, Vernon has been actively tracking the development of COVID-19 which prompted the creation of a dedicated web page in early 2020 to relay important information on the coronavirus.
- Over the course of the emergency, Vernon has maintained contact with its businesses and residents via email, phone, social media platforms, and in-person (when possible), and has partnered with the Vernon Chamber of Commerce to provide updates on the ever-evolving pandemic.

**Partnership with AltaMed**

- In April, Vernon partnered with AltaMed Health Services Corporation, a non-profit medical provider with a significant presence in the Southeast Los Angeles Area region that provides services through community clinics.
- The City has contributed $250,000 to help fund COVID-19 screening and testing through AltaMed’s drive-thru evaluation centers which are available to all in the southeast region, including those who live and work in Vernon.
- As of mid-June, AltaMed has assessed over 40,000 individuals at their outdoor evaluation centers and cared for over 89,000 patients through telehealth efforts to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and support a safe reopening of California.

**Planned Actions**

**“Safe at Work & Safe at Home” Initiative**

*The City will partner with University of Southern California Medical School to perform contact tracing investigations related to COVID-19 cases and to develop health education material that may benefit the health and wellness of Vernon residents and workers.*

*Currently in development is a coordinated effort with the Vernon Chamber of Commerce, various labor groups, and business representatives to prepare for the potential second wave of COVID-19 and the upcoming flu season.*

**Active Tracking of COVID-19 Cases**

- In April, to monitor and address the potential spread of the virus in Vernon facilities, the City issued a notice requiring Vernon businesses to report the number of employees that have tested positive for COVID-19, which has been a key factor in identifying COVID-19 clusters that may have otherwise gone undetected.
- Businesses identified with clustered cases are monitored diligently and a list of businesses with positive employees is updated weekly and posted on the City’s website.
- The City has worked closely with affected businesses to ensure that all recommended guidelines and appropriate mitigation measures have been implemented at each site.

**Appointment of Vernon Health Officer**

- Despite its small residential population and cooperative working relationship with Los Angeles County Public Health Officials, Vernon proactively instated a Board-Certified physician to oversee health issues pertaining communicable diseases and other related Health Officer duties.
- The City’s Health Department, which has the requisite staff and expertise, will continue rigorous inspections for operations under its jurisdiction.
- Invested in the health of the community and committed to supporting all businesses, agencies, and organizations involved in managing the COVID-19 crisis on the local level, Vernon will continue to coordinate with each in its response to COVID-19 with a goal to mitigate the spread.
City of Vernon COVID-19 Mitigation Actions

- As of January 22, the City prominently displayed a web banner that alerted the public to a coronavirus outbreak in the Wuhan Province in China that was of great risk to the masses who were exposed to the virus. The web banner was linked to the Center for Disease Control website to offer additional information on the contagion.
- During the month of February, HECID staff remained apprised of COVID-19 updates and participated on telebriefing calls with Los Angeles County officials. Additionally, the City’s Human Resources Department distributed information on COVID-19 to its employees.
- The week of March 9, HECID distributed a comprehensive informational packet to Vernon residents and businesses that provided facts about COVID-19, its symptoms, proper steps to prevent its spread, and guidance for businesses and employers on how to respond.
- On March 11, a COVID-19 web page was developed to provide up-to-date information on the health emergency to the public.
- On March 14, the City declared a local state of emergency due to the current COVID-19 outbreak affecting the country. This action followed declarations by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, the State of California and the Federal government. The purpose of the proclamation of a local emergency was to assist in a coordinated public health response to reduce transmission and illness severity, aid public safety and health providers, and mitigate the effects of this pandemic on the citizens, businesses, and employees of the City.
- On March 16, the City implemented a “hotline” that allowed a convenient method for community members to contact City staff during the City Hall closure. Incoming calls were routed to appropriate parties to ensure that public needs were addressed in a simple, efficient manner. In order to protect the community and businesses in Vernon, the HECID placed temporary restrictions on large gatherings to reduce the likelihood of activities that involve individuals interacting in close proximity to one another.
- On March 20, the HECID began the process of issuing access letters to essential businesses. The City, in order to ensure that eligible businesses operating within City limits were unimpeded in their efforts to maintain continuity of production, provided letters in response to requests after validating the nature of the business.
- On March 27, the City announced on its website contact information specifically for the reporting of any COVID-19 violations in the City.
- On March 30, the City finalized a Warning Letter Notification expressly for businesses operating out of compliance of the temporary prohibitions implemented by the State and County of Los Angeles. When necessary, the HECID issued warning letters to businesses deemed non-essential who continued to operate in the City.
- On April 10, the City delivered cloth face coverings to all Vernon residents to encourage behaviors to aid in the mitigation of the spread of COVID-19 and promote the safety and well-being of the Vernon community. Additionally, the City disseminated information on its COVID-19 Resources web page dedicated to announcing the latest updates on the pandemic and offering information on valuable community resources such as food/groceries, COVID-19 testing, and federal and state financial assistance.
- On April 13, the HECID issued a notice that mandated social distancing protocols, remote work when possible, directed businesses to follow industry-specific guidance issued by the Health Officer of the County of Los Angeles Department of Public Health, and instructed COVID-19 confirmed positive cases at essential businesses operating in Vernon be reported to HECID staff.
- On April 17, the HECID initiated dialogue with the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health on a cluster of COVID-19 cases (a total of 6) at a high-profile Vernon business.
- On April 21, outreach was conducted on behalf of the Vernon Chamber of Commerce which encouraged participation of businesses in a webinar that focused on Employee Law and Small Business Administration Guidelines.
- On May 14, a Stage 2 Reopening Notice was issued to provide guidance to Vernon businesses pursuant to the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health revised Safer at home Order issued on May 13. Within the notice, the HECID states that it will enforce requirements that allow the conditional reopening of specific retail and other lower-risk businesses as defined by the County Order.
- On June 22, the City delivered a second batch of cloth face coverings to all Vernon residents along with written materials on how to wear the coverings properly and where to access community resources during the crisis.

Connect with the City of Vernon

For questions regarding COVID-19, please contact the HECID at (323) 826-1448 or via email at Health@ci.vernon.ca.us. You may also visit our website at www.cityofvernon.org/covid19 for the latest COVID-19 updates, or follow us on:

www.cityofvernon.org  July 1, 2020