



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Date:** Monday, April 6, 2020  
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**MEDIA ADVISORY: Coronavirus Update 04.06.2020**

**CANTON, OHIO** – This is Canton Mayor Tom Bernabei. I want to give all citizens of Canton and Stark County assurances that despite the challenges and inconveniences that we are facing during the coronavirus pandemic, that we are doing well in dealing with the spread of the disease. To date, in Stark County (as of Monday, April 6) there are 109 cases, with 22 hospitalized and 7 deaths. Stark County has a population of 370,000.

This is not to understate, however, that the coronavirus is a very serious public health concern. It is a cause for serious concern but not panic or despair. It is a very contagious infectious disease and is particularly dangerous to persons over the age of 70 and dangerous to persons with respiratory and other pre-existing conditions. It is particularly dangerous because persons who become infected often show no symptoms and therefore can spread the disease unknowingly. Therefore, it is critical that all directives from the Canton, Stark County and Ohio Departments of Health, CDC and Ohio Governor's office be closely followed.

***How is the city of Canton responding to the COVID-19 pandemic?***

I want to assure you that Canton City government continues to operate and is providing all essential services, without interruption, from safety forces to public utilities. Sanitation routes and schedules remain without change.

City government is protecting our employees while performing our vital services. The two are not mutually exclusive. We continue to review the operations of all departments concerning scheduling, social distancing, temperature monitoring, protective gear, etc. We are reviewing best practices regarding use of sick leave, vacation, unpaid leave and work from home. We are not presently contemplating the furlough or layoff of employees but that may be required depending on the severity of cuts in income tax and other revenues needed to operate government.

We urge everyone to continue to support the many members of our community in the restaurant, tavern, entertainment and other service industries that have been adversely affected by the pandemic.

Regarding economic distress, the federal CARES ACT that was passed and signed into law on Friday, March 27, 2020, provides unemployment and small business relief. See [how the CARES Act impacts Ohio](#).

My special thanks go to the frontline workers in essential industries who daily face risk associated with exposure to COVID-19: our healthcare workers, our first responders, and so many other essential workers, both in and out of government, who keep our city running.

***Who do I contact if I have questions or concerns?***

My office receives questions of local concern, not always addressed in state and national briefings. Please send questions to my office via phone at (330) 438-4307 or by email at [suggest@cantonohio.gov](mailto:suggest@cantonohio.gov) and we will do our best to answer them. Answers to some of the more recent questions are below.

***Do we have a shortage of hospital beds to treat COVID-19 patients in Canton and Stark County?***

No. Presently, there is substantial bed capacity at Aultman Hospital and Mercy Medical Hospitals to treat present cases of COVID-19.

***What is “surge planning” and does this mean that we are going to be overrun by the disease?***

“Surge planning” is planning and preparedness for “what if” scenarios for large increases in cases of coronavirus based on anticipated but theoretical modeling as of this date, which models we anticipate will be updated later this week. The modeling is not definitive. Ohio is divided into eight regions for purposes of planning; we are part of the North East Central region, including Canton, Akron and Youngstown. This planning is coordinated by our local health officials, hospitals, emergency planning agencies, both local and state, the National Guard and other experts who look at actual hospital bed availability, the potential need for beds and the availability of other facilities to house patients, and do planning for the same. The surge need remains unknown as of this date. Please rest assured that detailed planning is being done.

***Do we have a shortage of PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) for healthcare workers and safety responders?***

There continues to be a critical need for PPE, Personal Protective Equipment, but there are not dangerous shortages, particularly locally. Nationally, more and more companies are ramping up to manufacture various kinds of PPE. We also thank numerous individuals and businesses who have donated PPE, masks and sanitizers, to our safety forces and hospitals and healthcare workers. Yes, all donations are welcome.

***Does our area have a critical shortage of ventilators, like what is happening in many parts of the country?***

While there are national shortages, our area has adequate supplies of ventilators, for present needs. Private manufacturers across the United States are retooling their businesses to produce ventilators but there remains a national shortage.

***Are citizens required to wear protective facemasks when in public?***

The CDC and ODH have put out a recommendation that citizens wear protective facemasks. As of this date, there is no mandatory requirement. See [Ohio Department of Health's Checklist for Face Coverings](#) for details and for information as to how to construct said masks. Masks are not a substitute for other preventative measures: Stay at Home if your trip is not essential, stay at home and call your medical provider if you have symptoms and need medical advice; cover your cough and wash your hands frequently; if you must be out in the community, maintain social distancing.

***Why do I see Ohio National Guard driving in our area and what are they doing?***

If you see the Ohio National Guard in our area, do not be concerned; they are here to help us. They are here at the direction of the Governor to help provide services during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their role is humanitarian and not military. They are not here to impose martial law. To date, the Ohio National Guard has been deployed by the Governor to help at Ohio's food banks with packing, sorting and distributing food and to assist in surge capacity planning. To my understanding, the National Guard has looked at the closed Affinity Hospital in Massillon as a potential facility for this region. The Canton Mayor's office has also been asked about availability of the Civic Center as a possible site.

We post daily to the City's website at [www.cantonohio.gov](http://www.cantonohio.gov) which has the latest information from City government, the State of Ohio, CDC, World Health Organization.

**You may access these links for the latest updated information:**

**City of Canton Government:** [www.cantonohio.gov](http://www.cantonohio.gov)

**City of Canton Health Department:** [www.cantonhealth.org](http://www.cantonhealth.org)

**Ohio Health Department:** [www.coronavirus.ohio.gov](http://www.coronavirus.ohio.gov)

**Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):** [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)

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