EAST CHICAGO life

YOUR LOCAL SOURCE FOR EAST CHICAGO NEWS AND EVENTS

CORONAVIRUS
2019-nCov

SPECIAL REPORT

City of East Chicago
Hope & Progress
INDIANA

CORONAVIRUS UPDATES

The City of East Chicago is working with first responders and health officials to ensure those who become ill have access to vital tests and care.

Let's remember to watch out for – and help – our neighbors during the weeks and months to come.

As things are rapidly changing, please check our website – eastchicago.com – Facebook page and ECTV for the latest updates.

Turn the page to learn more.

East Chicago is committed to keeping you safe – and connected – during this health emergency



As we navigate profound changes in the way we live our day-to-day lives, I want you to know East Chicago is prepared for the challenges ahead.

The Executive Order issued by my office contains contingencies that change the way we do business. From first responders to utilities, parks and streets, plans have been put in place to protect you, your neighbors and friends. These new rules also serve to keep our city workers in place while providing barriers between them and those who may have the virus.

As mayor of an industrial Mecca, such as East Chicago, I have the responsibility to do everything possible to slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus and protect those who are most vulnerable.

This is a difficult and extraordinary situation.

Indiana is just beginning this journey. The few cases that were reported in mid-March are escalating daily as more tests become available and more people become sick.

While the increasing number of confirmed cases create both fear and anxiety, it is an important next step. Identifying the sick so they can be treated as well as those who are positive — but do not feel ill — is vital in stopping the progression of COVID-19.

In the meantime, I am asking all East Chicago residents to shelter in place.

Keep in touch with loved ones by phone or text to make sure they are safe and have supplies. No need to hoard groceries. Our food supply chains remain robust and in place.

Stay home. Be kind to one another — remotely.

ANTHONY COPELAND
Mayor City of East Chicago

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW: EAST CHICAGO



DR. GERI BROWNING

Health Officer
EC Health Department

MINIMAL CONTACT KEY TO BEATING COVID-19

While East Chicago moves forward with providing essential services, we are asking all residents to minimize their exposure to this highly contagious virus by sheltering in place.

The governor's order to remain at home is the best defense we have against the spread of the illness.

Until you have been tested negative, we need for everyone to assume they have the virus and take the same precautions as they would for anyone who is sick – lots of hand washing, cleaning and sanitizing of your home including laptops, computers, tablets, phones and door knobs.

If you must go out, make sure you wipe down door handles — inside and out — along with steering wheels, seats and dashboards.

Minimal contact with anyone outside your household is key. Stay in touch with family and friends remotely. If someone in your home becomes ill with a respiratory illness, contact your physician immediately.

PUBLIC ACCESS

All City of East Chicago buildings – in keeping with the governor's March 23 directive — are closed to the public until further notice. Other changes include:

- East Chicago public meetings – Tune into Channel 21 or ECTV.
- All East Chicago recreation centers and facilities are closed until further notice.
- Rentals of all city venues are suspended, including Riley Hall, park shelters and the East Chicago Marina.
- Bars, nightclubs and restaurants are limited to drive-thru, take-out and delivery.
- Banks are limiting service to drive-thrus only. Buildings and lobbies are closed.
- Ameristar Casino is closed until further notice of the state gaming commission.

Get the latest emergency notifications: Text ECEVENTS to 888777 or register at **nixle.com**.

EAST CHICAGO POLICE

Until the mayor announces an all-clear, residents should report non-emergency incidents – lost wallets, cell phones or stolen license plates – by calling (219) 660-0000. A dispatcher will ask a series of questions and then an officer will return the call to take a report. Please use 911 for emergencies only.

"If you must come to the police department, we are asking you to come alone," East Chicago Police Chief Hector Rosario said. "It is vital we do our very best to minimize exposure and practice safe, social distancing. Our officers are already being exposed to the unknown. We need to do everything we can to keep them — and you — safe.

"We are also taking extra steps to keep our jail clean. It is sanitized throughout the day and, again, once a prisoner leaves the facility," he said. "Officers are equipped with gloves, sanitizer, masks and cleaning wipes to keep their squad cars clean."

EAST CHICAGO FIRE

The East Chicago Fire Department continues to provide 24-hour service to residents. Coronavirus will not change that. "We are committed to providing uninterrupted service during this unprecedented emergency," Fire Chief Anthony Serna said "If you need us, do what you always do – dial 911."

Superior Ambulance and East Chicago firefighters are practicing a 6-foot assessment to determine if a patient's signs and symptoms are consistent with COVID-19.

"Please do not misunderstand the space we are keeping between ourselves and you," Serna said. "This is meant to protect all of us."

EAST CHICAGO WATER DEPARTMENT

As part of the city's response to the threat posed by COVID-19, the East Chicago Water Department is implementing the following safety measures when it comes to Water Department payments.

In-person transactions at the Water Department have been suspended until further notice. We would like to remind customers of other payment options available, all of which remain accessible:

- Online payments at **eastchicago.com**.
- United States Postal Service or mail
- First Merchants Bank (East Chicago Branch)
- Peoples Bank (East Chicago Branch)
- Strack & Van Til (East Chicago Store)
- After-hour Depository (checks and money orders only) located at the Water Department Office on the east side of the building and below the drive-up window.
- The drive-thru option will remain available for bill payment during regular hours.

QUESTIONS? Please contact the Water Department at (219) 391-8469.



EAST CHICAGO BUS TRANSIT

East Chicago transit will continue uninterrupted fixed-route and paratransit service. We are asking riders to practice safe social distancing when possible and refrain from using city buses if you are feeling unwell.

"East Chicago Transit has supplemented its daily cleaning and disinfecting procedures by adding an additional disinfecting spray-down of all handrails," Bus Transit Director Francisco Rosado said.

"Each of our drivers has hand sanitizer for their own use and extra disinfectant to spray the interior of the buses."

EAST CHICAGO REDEVELOPMENT

Following Gov. Eric Holcomb's order to shelter in place, Redevelopment Executive Director Frank Rivera is asking residents filing for mortgage assistance, the roofing program or any other East Chicago redevelopment initiative to complete their forms at home.

City Hall is closed to the public until further notice. Residents needing assistance as they navigate the forms may call redevelopment at (219) 391-8513.

You can also request an application be mailed to your location by request. Additional information is available on our website at **eastchicago.com**.



EAST CHICAGO BUILDING DEPARTMENT

With the beginning of spring, the East Chicago Building Department ramps up activity. What will be different this year is how we manage building and inspections to keep residents and staff safe.

"We are asking residents for their patience as we work through these changes," Building Commissioner James Portalatin said.

"In keeping with the governor's order of March 23, which declares everyone who can stay at home to do so, our offices are closed to the public until further notice."

Rental registrations will now be handled via email. Find forms at **eastchicago.com**.

The following items must be submitted as an attachment in a folder by address and can be emailed to mchandler@eastchicago.com and cfowler@eastchicago.com:

- Completed Rental Registration Form
- Declaration page of property insurance
- Smoke detector form signed by tenants– one per rental unit.

Once received, office staff will contact the property owner for payment.

Please note: Past due rental registration and late payment fees will be assessed. Payment may be made over the phone via credit card. Payment stickers will be emailed to the property owner.

QUESTIONS? Please contact the Building Department at (219) 391-8294.

EAST CHICAGO SCHOOLS

All School City of East Chicago schools are closed through May 1, which may be extended as schools reassess the situation.

Grab-and-go brunch is currently served from 10 a.m. to noon Monday through Friday at EC Central, Block, Harrison, Lincoln and McKinley. Students and parents are not allowed to enter the building. All doors will remain open or a tent will be provided outside the building. Students will not be required to touch handles or door knobs, which are sources of contamination.

INFO: For more information or updates, visit the school website at **spec.k12.in.us.**

EAST CHICAGO LIBRARY

The East Chicago Public Library – 2401 E. Columbus and 1008 W. Chicago – is closed until April 13 or until further notice. Card holders can access digital resources at **ecpl.org**.

ST. CATHERINE HOSPITAL

Community Healthcare System continues to monitor the spread of the COVID-19 virus. This is a rapidly evolving situation and we are following CDC guidelines and recommendations. During the pandemic:

- General visitation is suspended.
- All approved adult visitors will be screened for symptoms and travel.

For the safety of our staff, patients and visitors, the hospital is taking extra precautions including additional cleaning, disinfecting, appropriate use of masks, gloves and gowns, and enforcing home isolation as necessary.

All entrances remain open.

INFO: For more information or updates, visit the hospital system website at **comhs.org.**

ASSISTANCE FOR EAST CHICAGO RESIDENTS

NORTH TOWNSHIP ASSISTANCE

New processes have been put in place to remotely assist North Township residents who need help paying their mortgage, rent, utilities and burials during the pandemic. Food vouchers are currently unavailable.

East Chicago case managers are conducting assistance interviews by phone. Residents should call (219) 398-2435. Before calling, you will need a few documents, including:

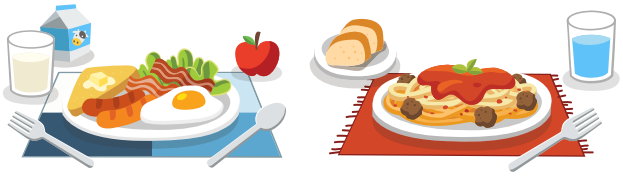
- Food Stamps/AFDC Program Verification
- Receipts or landlord statement that prove residency and its associated costs
- Last four pay stubs, strike verification, unemployment card, proof of child support, Social Security check or TANF/AFDC letter
- Proof of family size you are claiming
- Medical expense records
- Asset list
- Last month's expense sheet with credit cards, utilities, loans and cable listed.

Although documents will not be required during the crisis, those who receive assistance will be asked to provide copies of documents in the days and weeks to come.

Please note: NIPSCO voluntarily suspended shutoffs for nonpayment during the COVID-19 pandemic. The company is also offering flexible payment plans and will eliminate late payment charges until May 1.

"I encourage everyone who is requesting assistance to contact North Township's hardworking case managers first," North Township Trustee Frank J. Mrvan said . "These individuals are working every minute of their day helping North Township residents.

INFO: If you have an urgent need and are unable to get in touch with a case manager, call Mrvan directly at (219) 746-5792 or Chief of Staff Lori Polgar at (219) 313-3930.



CATHOLIC CHARITIES FOOD PANTRY

North Township Trustee Frank J. Mrvan and the local Catholic Charities Food Pantry are working to provide food deliveries to seniors and the disabled community in East Chicago.

Elizabeth Acevedo, manager of Catholic Charities Food Pantry in East Chicago, said they are happy to help. "Our country is in a crisis. Our partnership with North Township is an example of what happens when agencies dedicated to helping others come together. We are proud to help."

INFO: Call (219) 306-1344. The goal is same-day delivery and maximum response within 24 hours. Deliveries will be completed before 6 p.m. Monday through Friday.

EAST CHICAGO SALVATION ARMY

The Salvation Army is serving hot meals from its mobile canteen from noon to 1 p.m. in the parking lot at 513 W. Chicago Ave. The food pantry is open 9 to 11 a.m. Monday-Thursday.

INFO: Call (219) 398-2939 or email Trinette at Trinette.wash@usc.salvationarmy.org.

MEALS ON WHEELS

Meals on Wheels of Northwest Indiana continues to make every effort to ensure clients are taken care of during this pandemic and does not anticipate interruption to its current home delivered meals.

INFO: Call (219) 756-3663 or visit **mownwi.org** for more information and updates.

CANCELLATIONS

The City of East Chicago is closely monitoring the outbreak of the 2019 novel (new) coronavirus or COVID-19. Like you, we're concerned about the spread of the virus and are taking all necessary precautions to make sure our residents stay healthy and safe.

The Centers of Disease Control guidelines limit gatherings to 10 persons or less, the following special events have been cancelled:

APRIL 4
Annual East Egg Hunt

APRIL 16
The State of the City Address

APRIL 22
East Chicago Career Fair

APRIL 24
Earth Day / Arbor Day event

MAY 1
Cinco de Mayo Celebration

MAY 8
Annual Flower Show

CENSUS 2020

Every household in East Chicago received a notice in March with detailed information on how to complete the 2020 Census online, by phone or by mail. Stand up and be counted!

HELPFUL LINKS

For more information and updates on the pandemic:

COVID 19 HOTLINE
(877) 826-0011

STATE DEPT. OF HEALTH
in.gov/coronavirus

CDC
cdc.gov/coronavirus

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U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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