

MARCH 25, 2020—LATEST LOCAL INFORMATION ON COVID-19—Q&A

These are unsettling times. Jackson County and municipal leaders, public health officials, emergency responders and local law enforcement believe a continual flow of up-to-date information is critical.

As best we can, we are answering the community's questions through a variety of formats.

This is our second Q&A (the first can be found at jacksonnc.org (click on "emergency declaration" at the bottom of the page) or go to @jacksonNCEM on Facebook and scroll to yesterday's post (March 24).

Q: Why are part-time residents being allowed into Jackson County?

A: Because they have the right to access and use the property they own in Jackson County, and we don't currently have the ability to prevent them from accessing their property. Local government and public health officials do encourage arriving part-time residents to practice self-distancing or to self-quarantine for 14 days upon arrival. "More generally, we urge our seasonal neighbors to weigh the wisdom of travel and, additionally, of coming into a community with limited health resources," Health Department Director Shelley Carraway said.

Q: When does the ban on short-term rentals start?

A: Today (March 25) at 5 p.m. no rentals of less than a month will be allowed in Jackson County. The restriction does not apply to people working in the area, staying for emergency shelter, sheltering for domestic violence protection or participating as COVID-19 medical-response personnel. Additionally, Gov. Roy Cooper ordered certain businesses to close today, too, as did Jackson County. (see: <https://governor.nc.gov/news> and www.jacksonnc.org (click on State of Emergency at the bottom of the page for a list).

Q: Why don't you take more drastic action?

A: County, municipal, health and law-enforcement leaders are continually assessing the steps needed to protect this community. Local emergency management, law enforcement and medical responders participate in a daily conference call each morning about COVID-19 with Health Department officials, local government and Harris Regional Hospital representatives. During the conference call, up-to-date information is shared and a daily response plan is formulated.

Q: Why is the state listing a COVID-19 case in Jackson County when you said on Monday there is a single COVID-19 case that involves a part-time resident, meaning it would not be counted in North Carolina? Are there actually two cases?

A: No. Local public health officials are in contact with their state counterparts to correct this error. There is one COVID-19 case in Jackson County. To date, we have no evidence of community transmission in Jackson County. The Health Department updates the case count daily, by noon, on its website.

Q: What is community spread?

A: This is when a patient contracts COVID-19, but we don't know how they contracted it, because they do not have a travel history or a known contact with a person with COVID-19. North Carolina had its first case of COVID-19 on March 19.

Q: Can I get tested for COVID-19 at the Jackson County Department of Public Health?

A: Yes, JCDPH can test patients for COVID-19, if they meet the current criteria and have a doctor's order. Tell your healthcare provider to call JCDPH first so that we can be prepared. Bring your doctor's order with you or have your provider fax it to us.

Q: How can I access up-to-date information?

A: You can call 631-HELP (8 a.m. to 6 p.m.) at Jackson County Emergency Management Operations and ask questions. You can get expert COVID-19 medical information by emailing questions to: publichealthinfo@jacksonnc.org. Also, visit <http://health.jacksonnc.org> and follow the Health Department on Facebook: @JacksonCoDPH. You can follow the local emergency and law enforcement response by going to jacksonnc.org and scrolling to the bottom of the page. Click on Declaration of State of Emergency. Also, follow Jackson County Emergency Services on Facebook (@jacksonNCEM). On a state level, if you have questions or concerns, call the COVID-19 phone line toll-free at 866-462-3821. This helpline is staffed by North Carolina Poison Control 24 hours a day, seven days a week.