**Habersham County Update for COVID-19 Preparedness**

**Sunday, March 15, 2020**

Habersham County Government is continuing to take steps to respond to the unprecedented coronavirus (COVID-19) situation to help stop the spread of the virus while ensuring essential government functions. As of midnight, on March 14, there are no confirmed positive or presumed positive COVID-19 cases in Habersham County. The Georgia Department of Public Health has a daily status report map updated each night at midnight showing confirmed cases by counties. This map is linked at <https://dph.georgia.gov/>.

The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) is closely monitoring the outbreak of respiratory illness caused by a novel (new) coronavirus (COVID-19) first identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China in December 2019, and is regularly coordinating with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) <https://www.cdc.gov/>.

“Habersham County Emergency Management Team including: E911, Emergency Service and Law Enforcement staff continues to meet and prepare for any local response actions that may become necessary as this situation continues to develop” says Lynn Smith, EMA / E911 Director.

There are NO COVID-19 cases in Habersham County at this time. Out of an abundance of caution and to help prevent the spread of this virus and protect those persons most vulnerable to the disease the County is taking these initial steps.

1. Superior Courts in Habersham County and Mountain Judicial Circuit will scale back operations for the next 30 days to minimize non-essential visits to the Courthouse. Juries and the Grand Jury are cancelled for the next 30 days. Questions concerning the Courts activities should be directed to the Clerk of Superior Court or the presiding Judge.
2. Emergency Services will immediately restrict all nonessential persons from our stations. Walk-In Patients should call ahead to E911 before being allowed to access the County Fire Stations. Directions and guidance are posted on the station doors. These changes will remain in effect until the situation improves and we feel the potential for exposure is reduced or eliminated.
3. The March 24, 2020 Presidential Preference Primary has been postponed and will be rescheduled to coincide with the General Election Primary scheduled for May 19, 2020.
4. Habersham County Parks and Recreation will be suspending many recreational sporting activities.
5. The Ruby Fulbright Aquatic Center and Senior Center wellness centers will continue operations until further notice.Visitors should expect to be asked questions related to potential flu symptoms.

“As always we encourage our citizens to prepare for any emergency or disaster situation that could occur in Habersham County. PREPARE DON’T PANIC” says Chad Black, Director of Emergency Services.

You can now access information directly at [www.habershamga.com](http://www.habershamga.com), and click on the CONOVIRUS link. This will link you to updated information from Habersham County Government, the CDC, and Georgia Department of Public Health. Links will be added as valuable information becomes available.

“I want to assure the citizens of Habersham County that our emergency management team is meeting regularly regarding the growing pandemic concerns and assure everyone that Habersham County has not only a Pandemic Response Plan but also has maintained a continuity of operations to support our community.  By having plans in place, it helps us to be better prepared when these situations arise,” states Dr. Stacy Hall, Chairman of the Board of Commissioners.

He added, “I would like to personally encourage our community to prepare and not give into panic but to also use common sense measures regarding you and your family’s health and well-being.  Also, I would like for us all to be vigilant in prayer for not only our Habersham County community but our entire country and to encourage one another as we anticipate successfully overcoming this health obstacle.   Please know that any decisions we make on behalf of our county will be done so in an abundance of caution and concern for safety.”

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