

Alta Town Council

Staff Report



To: Town of Alta Staff, Mayor and Town Council
From: Chris Cawley, Assistant Town Administrator/Emergency Manager
Re: COVID-19 Preparedness and Response in Alta
Date: April 1, 2020
Attachments:

Much of this information is likely to change between the date of this report and the date of the town council meeting. I'll prepare a new report if conditions change substantially prior to the meeting. --Chris

BACKGROUND

As of the March 11th, 2020 Alta Town Council meeting, our outlook on the COVID-19 outbreak was substantially different to what it is today. Alta Ski Area and the other local businesses in Alta were operating, although lodging businesses were beginning to receive cancellation requests and adjust operations to mitigate risk of exposure. Only 3 cases were confirmed in Utah, all among visitors to the state or individuals with recent travel history to COVID-19 hotspots, and the Utah Department of Health was officially advising that “community transmission” of the virus was not occurring in Utah.

March 14th was a pivotal day for the Utah COVID-19 outbreak, and for Alta’s place within the outbreak. Two things occurred that day which changed the statewide outlook and our local situation:

--A doorman at a bar in Park City tested positive for COVID-19, and did not report contact with a confirmed COVID-19 patient or travel to an area with community transmission of the virus; this was the first confirmed case of community transmission in Utah and it triggered the first escalated public health response in the state when the Summit County Health Office ordered the closure of all dine-in food service.

--Ski areas around the country announced closures related to the COVID-19 outbreak during the day, including closures by Vail Resorts and Alterra Mountain Company of all resorts in their portfolios. Alta Ski Area and Snowbird announced suspension of operations late that evening, and most other Alta businesses closed shortly thereafter.

STATE OF UTAH COVID-19 SITUATION, 4/1/2020:

State of Utah confirmed cases: 1012

Salt Lake County cases: 396
People tested: 20155
Hospitalizations: 91
Fatalities: 7

Cases are doubling every 3.8 days in Utah; Summit County has by far the highest case rate. Governor Herbert issued a “Stay Safe, Stay at Home” *directive* Friday, March 27th. The directive is similar to actions taken by other US governors, although it is merely a series of recommendations, not a legally binding order. The directive provides a pathway for local authorities including county health departments and municipalities to issue more stringent orders. The State of Utah had previously ordered closures of public schools and dine-in food service, among other measures.

TOWN OF ALTA COVID-19 SITUATION, 4/1/2020

Currently, Alta and Brighton are the only municipalities in Salt Lake County that have not reported cases of COVID-19 locally. The town has been notified of several cases of individuals self-isolating for various reasons, but presently none of these cases has resulted in a positive test result or serious illness. The Peruvian Lodge reported publicly that as many as four guests who checked out of the lodge in the final week of lodge operations tested positive after returning to other states; but no other cases have been reported at the Peruvian, or at other businesses in the meantime.

On March 14th, Mayor Sondak issued a proclamation of local emergency for the Town of Alta, and has since issued three subsequent emergency proclamations exercising emergency powers under State of Utah Code to do the following:

- close lodges, bars and restaurants
- prohibit nightly rentals
- require symptomatic employees to refrain from work
- reduce Town of Alta operations to essential services
- prohibit carpooling and congregation at trailheads and in parking lots
- prohibit urinating and defecating on public property
- clarify or extend orders regarding business activity
- require out-of-state visitors to self-quarantine for 14 days
- prohibit housekeepers and caretakers from entering units that have been vacant for less than 72 hours

I have been facilitating various functions in my role as emergency manager, including:

- daily email briefing to Town of Alta staff regarding COVID-19 situation locally and regionally
- daily video conferences between mayor and staff regarding COVID-19 situation
- daily SL County Emergency Management conference calls
- communication of emergency proclamations, local intelligence, and local service disruption/unmet needs reporting to SL County Emergency Management
- Development of an Incident Command System (ICS) concept of operations plan
- Compilation and dissemination of information about business assistance opportunities

The Town has implemented the following interventions to maintain continuity of operations and limit opportunities for transmission of the virus locally:

- closed the Town of Alta office to general public access
- closed the Alta Community Center/Library consistent with SL County library closures
- administrative staff have equipped ourselves to work from home, with one staff member present in the office per day
- limited Alta Post Office access to one person at a time in the lobby area
- tracked expenses associated with COVID-19 response and submitted estimates to SL County Emergency Management
- communicated with SL County Joint Command and Valley Emergency Communications Authority to ensure the Alta Marshals Office is notified if Alta addresses are “flagged” for potential public health risks. Since the Alta Marshals Office is not technically integrated with valley-wide computer aided dispatch systems like other SL County police agencies, this awareness is not “built in” to our dispatch program and must be obtained in other ways