

Brown Co Sheriff addresses virus concerns

Editor's note: The following releases were submitted to MSC News by Brown County Sheriff John Merchant and Jackson County Sheriff Tim Morse.

I would like to inform the public about protocol and procedures that will be effective immediately for the Brown County Jail. This is for the safety and health concerns of all involved as well offering some other beneficial information.

Many hours have been spent keeping abreast of the current health situation nationwide, speaking and meeting with state and local health care professionals and other correctional facilities. I have to make sure we are making the wisest choices for the public, staff and inmates. The current health situation in our nation changes almost hourly but we have to make decisions based on what will be best for our county as a whole.

Measures are already in place for dispatch, jail and deputy protocol for the continued long-term operation of the sheriff's office. Staff have been advised and updated on what steps are needed to keep themselves as healthy as possible during this ordeal and provided with the most recent information as it comes in.

Effective immediately we are restricting visitation of inmates in the jail as well as any other outside programs not law enforcement related or required by the state. This is to limit any potential exposure to staff and inmates. Inmates have the ability to use video visitation with family members via a kiosk in each dayroom. It is monitored and provides an alternative to in person visitations and most jails already have this option in place for visitations. Attorneys have the ability to see their clients in the jail setting as always. We are working with our health care provider on new inmate screening procedures.

Authorized personnel only are allowed to be in the control room or dispatch center. This is limited to Jail/dispatch personnel on official duty and Sheriff/Undersheriff until further notice.

The lobby of the Sheriff's office will remain open as usual for VINS, make reports, obtain copies of reports, conceal carry applications or anything you may feel is important.

I want to reassure the public that deputies will still be on patrol as

usual, making traffic stops, serving papers, investigating criminal activity, and providing all the services you have come to expect from us. We have provided some additional requirements for deputies for their health and safety. As always, if you feel you need to report something--call us.

I urge anyone with questions or concern about the current COVID 19 situation to go on the KDHE website at www.kdheks.gov for the most up to date information. If you have recently traveled outside our area, please contact our local Health Department at 785-742-2505. They have done an excellent job in keeping up to date with this situation. We are very fortunate to have some of the most caring, hard-working health care professionals around. There has been a lot of information sharing and gathering all behalf of the health of our county residents. With this latest concern with the COVID 19 virus, they have worked exhaustively with many agencies to ensure our safety. Through their diligence and everyone working together we can get through this. Please do not panic, we have a very capable group of people in our county to take care of us.

I feel I have to address the issues of hoarding and panic that has swept not only our area, but throughout the nation. This is a serious situation but if we all work together and keep from over-reacting, I know we will all get through this. This virus is so new and unique, not all factors are known, but what is a constant is that it does affect people differently. One person may not have any signs of illness but could spread the virus unintentionally, so please keep informed of requirements and suggestions made by KDHE and our local health department--AND FOLLOW THOSE RECOMMENDATIONS!

Everyone needs to remember, impulse buying and hoarding directly affects others. If you are buying in quantity to deprive or to resell to others, this is an illegal act. No one needs to excessively purchase items that are critically needed by others such as sanitizers, disinfectants, food and many other items. Remember, if people are not able to get these items due to unnecessary hoarding, they could be susceptible to the virus due to lack of ability to protect themselves. We also need to look after our friends and neighbors who are elderly or physically unable to get supplies for themselves. Check in on them and help out where you can, we have to work together and we will get through this.

I know this is a lot to get through, but if you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at 785-742-7125

John

Many Signals Communications