



KNOX COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Guidance for Knox County Citizens Parks are Open for Walking, but Congregating Prohibited, Face Covering Recommended

The Knox County Unified Command reminds citizens that open areas in local parks are available for visitors to enjoy but congregating in groups beyond an individual household are prohibited, and face coverings are strongly encouraged.

Citizens can enjoy the walking trails, fish in the lakes, or go biking – while social distancing – but the facilities are closed. That means the campground, the tennis courts and golf course, the pools and gyms, the pavilion and public bathrooms are not open at this time.

Because playground equipment has the potential to harbor on surfaces the COVID-19 virus from other visitors, some towns have closed playground equipment. Please check with your City Hall for up-to-date information. Likewise, the Connie Nott Dog Park is also a potential virus vector and may bring non-household members into close contact. Areas such as these are not open to the public.

“Getting outdoors during sunny weather and enjoying the walking trails is healthy behavior and will help revive people’s spirits during this extended stay at home period,” explains Michele Gabriel, administrator of the Knox County Health Department. “However, it’s important to continue maintaining social distance, wear face covering, and avoid congregating in groups. Even though we are in the midst of, what is a very meaningful holiday season for many, this is not the time to gather with family and friends outside your own household,” Gabriel adds.

While the parks are open and enjoying the outdoors is encouraged, local police are enforcing social distancing and will issue citations to those who congregate with others outside their household or in groups larger than ten. “Galesburg Police are patrolling park properties and will work to encourage park visitors to maintain social distance. When appropriate, officers will issue citations to those gathering in large groups or who access park or school district property behind locked gates or fences,” said Galesburg Police Chief Russ Idle.

Citizens are also asked to follow the latest guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). The CDC recommends wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where social distancing measures are difficult to maintain AND still continuing to follow the rule of staying at least six feet away from others not in their household while in



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public. Face covering and social distancing help slow the spread of the virus and help people who may have the virus and do not know it from passing it to others.

“Face covering is a valuable tool in helping to slow the spread of COVID-19 and allows each of us to take important action to protect each other,” Gabriel adds. The covering is intended to protect those around the wearer. Healthcare-grade masks are not needed for everyday wear. “Face coverings simply prevent moisture droplets in everyday breath from floating in the air around us; however, please remember that wearing a face covering does not mean that the individual does not have to social distance; the two practices are meant to work together to provide a greater amount of protection, not one to replace the other,” noted Gabriel. “Face coverings also serve as an important reminder to not touch our faces,” Gabriel says.

Face covering can be anything that prevents the spread of moisture in our breath from moving into the surrounding air. That can include cloth or paper masks, bandanas, neck gaiters, or even simple scarves. “The best face covering is the one you will wear and allows you to breathe easily,” Gabriel says.

Current Guidance from the CDC includes:

- Wear a face covering whenever outside your own home.
- Continue to keep social distance of at least six feet from others.
- Face covering is not recommended for babies under two years or those who already have difficulty breathing. Those individuals should be kept well away from others outside the household – and even from those inside the household if anyone exhibits cold or flu symptoms.

The Knox County Unified Command reminds county residents to use trusted sources for the latest information on COVID-19 such as; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention www.cdc.gov and Illinois Department of Public Health www.dph.illinois.gov. The following webpage, <http://gis.ci.galesburg.il.us/COVID> , is the official source of information on COVID-19 numbers for Knox County. For general questions about COVID-19, call the hotline at 1-800-889-3931, email dph.sick@illinois.gov or call your Knox County Health Department at 309-344-2224.