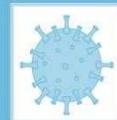


# Coronavirus



## MAYOR'S AUGUST 21, 2020 STATEMENT

The Honorable Joseph M. Corradino

Good afternoon, Pinecrest.

We have a lot on our plate this week. There is an impending storm on top of the coronavirus crisis.

### *Tropical Storm Laura*

There is a potential hurricane headed our way again. We know the drill. We should all be ready by this time in the season and a couple of practice runs already. Final preparations should be easy as the storm approaches. We've been working with our debris clearing contractors and they are ready. FPL will be in the community immediately should we need them. There are more shelters spread around so those that need them can stay socially distant. Pinecrest is ready!

### *COVID-19*

Again, this week we continue to see the trends improve. We've had some really good days where the positivity rate has been below 10%. Hopefully this continues and we can get below 10% on a 14 day average by early September, and below 5% soon after that. Loosening of the current restrictions on indoor dining and curfews should not be considered until the rate is below 5% on a two-week average. Even then, medical experts suggest a further relaxation cannot come until the rate is sustained below 1%. Masks will be with us for the foreseeable future.

It's been estimated that the number of the people that have had the disease is perhaps 10 times as high as the number of positive cases reported. That means there could be more than half of the people in our county who have had the disease. So, what is causing the decrease in cases? Is it the mandatory masks? Restrictions on indoor dining? The curfew? Testing and tracing? Herd immunity?

Likely it's a combination of all of the above except for testing and tracing, because these remain ineffective at this time. Tests take too long to get back to be preventative, and we have far too few tracers. We appear to be on our own in terms of local regulations to get through this at least for the next several months. Many in the rest of the state don't take this seriously enough to be of real help. Thankfully, the Governor is considering one "opening" for the rest of the state and another for Miami-Dade County.

Doctors tell us herd immunity comes when about 70% of the population have had the disease. The county has been unevenly affected by the disease. Perhaps, in certain hot spots, there may be a herd immunity. Even as we approach an estimated 50%, this remains speculative, theoretical and unreliable.

The fact that we've seen a decrease in cases and hospitalizations supports evidence that the most impactful way to fight this disease is through the regulatory measures we have taken. The curfew, the masks and restrictions on indoor dining are working. It's estimated that we are now in the middle of the pandemic. It's too early to claim victory. We must be vigilant. The concern of medical experts and policy makers is that complacency will (again) set in as disease recedes. If we stop behaving the way we have been over the last month, the disease will again resurge. It's going to take patience and time to get it where it needs to be.

In the next two weeks, Labor Day will be here and we are likely to see another spike, as we have seen on all other holidays. By October, we may be below the 5% positivity rate. At that time school may go back to in-person learning. We should be prepared for a spike then as many other communities have seen. If we can get past that time and all remains well, it would be best to incrementally lighten the regulations one at a time, then wait a period of time to determine the result. We must always be prepared to go backwards if the trends reverse.

We need to continue to focus on prevention strategies. This is the only way we can control the future of this disease.

Unless everyone is diligent about this, we will end up back in a bad situation. Take the recent example of the University of North Carolina. In that state, cases had peaked and were going down, hospitalizations had peaked and were going down, and the positivity rate was at about 5%. They were in better shape than we are in now. In-person school opened, students did not adhere to the protocols and within a week, the disease had spiked and in-person classes were cancelled. The fastest way to normal is to do what we have been doing. As we have seen in this county, each spike can set us back four months.

Disappointingly, the Florida High School Athletic Association has authorized high school sports to go back into full play by late August, despite not meeting the containment thresholds, and in direct conflict with the advice of their medical experts. This is a disaster waiting to happen. Thanks to top notch leadership, our public schools will not participate. I urge our private youth sports clubs in Miami-Dade County to not return to this level of play until the disease is under control. Given all we have been through and know of this disease, not doing so is irresponsible.

Why do we need to do all of this? Unfortunately, medical statisticians project that the death rate in Miami-Dade County from COVID-19 is likely going to end up at about 150 people per every 100,000 people. This is around the 2019 death rate for cancer and will rank as the second leading cause of death in the county this year. As a comparison, the 2019 death rate from influenza was 12 people per every 100,000 people. Did it have to be this way? Could it have been worse? We don't know, but these numbers are not acceptable. We must strive to do better. In Pinecrest, we are committed to that. The entire Village Council is engaged closely on a daily basis. Councilmember Hochkammer and I both have leadership positions with the League of Cities, an organization which is coordinating all municipalities to assure decisions are based on a common set of facts. Our Village Manager is coordinating with all other municipal administrators to assure the technical aspects of implementing and enforcing regulations are consistent. We will play a crucial role moving forward as Miami-Dade will have a new mayor in November, who must start work in full stride with a zero learning curve.

I know this is hard. It's inconvenient, it's demoralizing. The only thing worse would be to go back into a spike and delay our return by another several months.

## *The Numbers*

This week, the incidents of the disease have continued to drop.

**Symptoms:** Hospital Emergency Rooms report that the number of people exhibiting COVID or flu symptoms, like cough, fever and shortness of breath, continue to decline.

**Tests:** We are testing on average over 12,400 people per day. This is about 22% less than what we were doing two weeks ago. There is no shortage of tests. Demand is down.

**Infection Rate:** The numbers are going down. When measuring the rate of infection, we have a goal of keeping the percent of positive cases out of total tests under 10% on average over a two-week period. This number has gone from a low of 8.6% in early June, to a peak at about 21% in the third week of July. It is now about 12% which is down 40% from the July peak. We cannot consider relaxing any of our current rules until the average positivity rate goes under 5% every day for two weeks.

**Cases:** This week, just like last week, most of the cases are still affecting people in the age group between 18 and 34 years old. The median age is 43. Most people are reporting getting the disease at home, work and social gatherings as simple as visiting family and friends or going to a party.

**Hospitalizations:** The numbers are going down. At the April peak, we had 710 COVID-19 patients in the hospitals. By early June, we had managed this number down to 546 patients, 23% less than the April peak. Since that time, the number of COVID-19 patients in the hospital has peaked at 2,302, over 320% higher than our April peak. This week we reached 1,219. This is 48% less than the July peak, but still 172% higher than the April peak. We still have a very long way to go.

**Utilization:** When we measure hospital capacity, we look at beds, ICU beds and ventilators. We should stay below a 70% utilization rate. This week, 17% of regular beds are being utilized. This number is 5 percentage points less than last week and 75% less than the recent peak. When we count the potential cumulative amount of ICU beds available, we see 33% of ICU beds are being utilized, down 9 percentage points from last week. Ventilators are about 33% occupied, 10 percentage points less than the July peak.

**Deaths:** Average deaths per day over the last 14 days are rising. Most of the deaths are people over 60. Deaths will continue to rise until perhaps mid-September, not only because they are a proportion of the number of people in the hospital, but because the State reports deaths up to a month after they have occurred.

Contact Tracing/Test Results: This is getting better each week but still not adequate. The State of Florida is in complete control of this. We need 800 contact tracers, and this week they report we have about 600. This is about 150 more than last week but still not good enough given the fact we are nearly 6 months into the crisis. All of this could have been in place in April. Testing for the disease and the antibodies continues at the Pinecrest Municipal Center. Test results for the swab test are coming back in 48 hours and antibody results are coming back in about 30 minutes.

The Future: Do not relax. As policy makers, we cannot look for the easy answer. We know now that this disease is responsive to what we have been doing. We will soon be in a position to control and eradicate it. We must continue to wear a mask, stay home if we can, wash our hands, stay distant, and avoid un-masked indoor gatherings. We need to learn to live with this disease and prepare for inevitable spikes as Labor Day approaches, schools open, flu season starts, and fall and winter arrive.

Stay strong. As a community, we are doing what it takes. We should be encouraged but resolved to crush this as we gain tighter control. The fight is not nearly over.

We at the Village of Pinecrest are here to help us get through this crisis. If you need to contact me, please do so at 305-606-2364 or [jcorradino@pinecrest-fl.gov](mailto:jcorradino@pinecrest-fl.gov). Or contact our staff ([manager@pinecrest-fl.gov](mailto:manager@pinecrest-fl.gov)) and Village Council ([council@pinecrest-fl.gov](mailto:council@pinecrest-fl.gov)). Each and every one of us is working hard every day as a unified team.