

## **STATEMENTS FROM PUBLIC OFFICIALS MARCH 23, 2020**

### **Statement from Trey Folsie, Superintendent St. Tammany Parish Public Schools**

Effective immediately, the School System's "Grab and Go" meal distribution program will be suspended. The School System is looking at alternative ways to distribute food to families in our community, and state leaders have advised there may be state-wide meal distribution possibilities.

Superintendent Folsie realizes this is an important service for our families in need at this time, but says the safety and health of our St. Tammany students, employees, and community must remain our top priority.

Mr. Folsie also sincerely appreciates the School System's Food Service Managers, school administrators, and the PTA and community volunteers who worked last week and today to provide this service to our families. They worked tremendously hard to get meals out to our families in need during this difficult time and this could not have been done without the teamwork within our School System.

For the most updated information on this, and other School System information, please visit the district website at [STPSB.org](http://STPSB.org).

## **State Fire Marshall's Office: H. "BUTCH" BROWNING**

"The State Fire Marshal's Office would like the public to know we continue to review plans for new construction projects and are conducting final inspections on those completed projects daily, however, all annual building inspection schedules have been suspended. Our deputies continue to respond to calls for fire investigations and critical service needs to life safety systems in commercial structures. We'd like to make sure business owners know that inspections of their buildings' life safety and property protection (LSPP) systems are considered essential under the governor's "stay home order," therefore, they are encouraged to continue to comply with the code-required inspections conducted by licensed LSPP companies and individuals."

As an aside, the SFM would like to encourage families to keep in mind a few fire safety practices during this statewide stay home order:

- Please be mindful of the location of smoking materials like lighters and matches and ensure they are not in reach of children.
- Educate children on the dangers of playing with fire, including touching kitchen appliances that can ignite flames.
- Please be mindful when cooking to stay in close proximity to the active appliances you are cooking with.

The SFM would also like to make some suggestions to residents during any down time they may be experiencing during this public health emergency:

- Take this opportunity to check your smoke alarms to ensure they are in place and have working batteries
- Take this opportunity to develop a home escape plan with your children and make a weekly "home fire drill" to ensure they are familiar with the plan. This can even be developed in a homeschool lesson!
- Take this opportunity to make sure all the exits to your home are accessible and clear of clutter. Consider this a spring-cleaning exercise throughout your home!
- Check around your home for any fire hazards like overloaded sockets and/or power strips, combustibles too close to open flames, dangerous storage of household chemicals and/or chemicals/fuels used with outdoor equipment and home improvement work

## **Senator Sharon Hewitt**

Our Legislative delegation is working with parish leaders and their colleagues around the state to identify new state legislation that can be introduced when they return to the Capitol on March 31 that will help our citizens and businesses recover from the impact of COVID--19.

## **Dr. Gina Lagarde, Regional Medical Director/Administrator**

### **Office of Public Health, Louisiana Dept. of Health**

#### **Staying home saves lives!!!**

- With the increase in commercial testing and FEMA drive-thru testing sites, we are seeing an increase in the number of positive cases. We expect to see these numbers continue to increase. It is important that we all adhere to social distancing and limit gatherings. (Please see the latest executive orders from the Governor—especially Sections 2-5)
  
- **Community-wide measures are important, but individual behavior change is even more critical. We are asking our residents to** together and do their part to slow the spread of coronavirus and help keep everyone safe.
  - The single most important thing we can each do is to **stay home when we are sick. Staying home saves lives!!!**
  - Also, wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially before eating and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
  - Cover your cough (cough into your bent arm at the elbow)
  - Avoid touching your face (eyes, nose, mouth) with unwashed hands
  - Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe, including your cell phone.

## **Statement – Chief Kaufmann, St. Tammany Fire Protection District No.1**

On behalf of St. Tammany Parish Fire Chief's Association:

The St. Tammany Parish Fire Service is doing our part to “flatten the curve”; we are asking all members of the public to do the same. We are asking all citizens in St. Tammany Parish to comply with the Governor's Stay at Home Order. If you must go out, please only go out for essentials and maintain social distancing and hand sanitizing practices.

Police, Fire and EMS agencies are asking the public to be forthcoming when calling 911 to provide accurate information regarding any flu-like symptoms, fever, cough, positive Covid-19 tests or exposure to any persons with or suspected of having COVID-19. This is to ensure that we are able to utilize the proper personal protective equipment and send the proper resources to treat and/or transport patients.

We are working hard to maintain our response force for the duration of this pandemic.

We continue to respond to all life threatening emergencies including medical, fire, rescue, vehicle extrication and hazardous materials incidents.

We are asking the public to only call 911 for true emergencies.

If you are not critically ill, but in need of medical treatment please consider driving yourself if able or utilizing family members within the same household to transport you your doctor's office, urgent care or hospital of choice.

Please call ahead to give doctors the opportunity to prepare for you arrival and provide any special directions before arrival.

Our goal is to continue to take care of the public in their time of need while also protecting first responders and limiting the spread of the disease to other members of the public. We are still here for you  
#togetherapart!

## **Statement St. Tammany Health System**

St. Tammany Health System is providing care to all patients requiring hospitalization; we have capacity in our hospital for patients who need our care, COVID-19 or otherwise. As of this morning, STHS has 2 presumptive positive COVID-19 patients in proper isolation, plus 15 pending test results.

The hospital has instituted an outdoor triage to meet Louisiana Department of Health and CDC expectations. Outdoor triage helps decrease the number of individuals entering and leaving the hospital building itself.

STHS is managing supplies to safely care for patients and employees. Our Materials Management team is continuously sourcing supplies from public agencies and private industry. Community businesses such as dentists, construction companies and others offering assistance with surplus N-95 masks, surgical masks or face shields can call 985-898-4184 to arrange delivery. We thank our federal, state and local governments for exercising all influence to help us secure appropriate supplies.

Our lab is coordinating with both Ochsner and Lab Corp to improve our access to COVID-19 test results. Ochsner has developed onsite testing, and Lab Corp has developed a way to test in sterile saline, not requiring viral test media. These innovations will help to process tests more quickly, enabling faster results in our hospital and drive-through for patients with physician orders and signs/symptoms.

STHS along with others throughout the US healthcare system are continuing to respond to the needs of our community. The public needs to stay home to prevent the spread of the virus. We are keeping our website and social media channels updated with accurate, true information every day. Please read the [news section](#) on STPH.org and visit [STPH.org/COVID-19](https://STPH.org/COVID-19) to see accurate information about St. Tammany Health System.

**Statement Louisiana State Police**

In the Louisiana State Police's mission of public safety, we are ready to support as necessary, our local and federal partners. The interstates are open.

**Statement St. Tammany Parish Sheriff Randy Smith**

I want to warn citizens about scams, especially at a time like this. Also, we will have a high visibility in our neighborhoods through patrols.

## **Chris Masingill, Chief Executive Officer, St. Tammany Corporation**

St. Tammany Corporation stands at-the-ready to support our business and industry partners and the St. Tammany community. As the economic development organization for St. Tammany, we are in constant contact with local, state, and federal officials as we monitor the happenings and impacts of COVID-19.

Last week, we launched a COVID-19 Resource and Information Center on our website: [www.sttammanycorp.org](http://www.sttammanycorp.org). Through this platform, we are sharing the most recent information impacting industry, workforce, and education in St. Tammany.

## **CISA Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforce**

We must keep critical infrastructure and industry operating. Please contact our office directly at 985-809-7874 with any specific questions related to critical infrastructure. The complete CISA Guide is posted on our website for the convenience of our business and industry partners.

The following business categories are consistent with the CISA guidance for Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforce. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Food production, distribution, and sale
- Construction, including, but not limited to, construction required in response to this public health emergency, hospital construction, construction of long-term care facilities, public works construction, and housing construction
- Construction Engineers
- Building management and maintenance
- Airport operations
- Operation and maintenance of utilities, including water, sewer, and gas
- Electrical, including power generation, distribution, and production of raw materials
- Distribution centers
- Oil and biofuel refining
- Roads, highways, railroads, and public transportation
- Ports
- Cybersecurity operations
- Flood control

## **Chris Masingill, Chief Executive Officer, St. Tammany Corporation (Contd)**

- Solid waste and recycling collection and removal
- Internet, video, and telecommunications systems (including the provision of essential global, national, and local infrastructure for computing services, business infrastructure, communications, and web-based services)

### **SBA Economic Injury Disaster Loans**

The U.S. Small Business Administration will loan up to \$2 million to more than the 440,000 small businesses that could be impacted by Coronavirus.

Impacted small businesses may apply for up to \$2 million in working capital to pay for fixed debts, payroll, accounts payable and other bills that can't be paid because of the COVID-19 disaster. Loan terms (3.75 percent interest rate for small businesses; 2.75 percent for nonprofits) may be extended up to 30 years to keep payments affordable.

To get started immediately, visit [SBA.gov/Disaster](https://www.sba.gov/disaster).

A few items for businesses completing the application to consider include:

- Use Microsoft internet browser instead of Chrome or Firefox
- Complete your application as soon as possible.
- The applicant must have a physical presence in the area declared as a disaster, not just a P.O. Box.
- For loans under \$25,000, there is no collateral requirement. Loans over \$25,000 require collateral.

**Today, SBA Administrator Jovita Carranza announced automatic deferments through December 31, 2020, for borrowers still paying back SBA disaster loans from previous disasters such as the 2016 floods or Hurricanes Gustav, Ike, Katrina, or Rita. Borrowers of home and business disaster loans do NOT have to contact SBA to request deferment.**

If you have additional questions - or questions specific to your business - you are encouraged to contact the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at Southeastern Louisiana University at **985-549-3831** or via email at [lsbdc.selu@lsbdc.org](mailto:lsbdc.selu@lsbdc.org) for remote technical advice from SBDC experts.



**Chris Masingill, Chief Executive Officer, St. Tammany Corporation (Contd)**

**Unemployment Insurance**

For employees whose jobs have been impacted by COVID-19 and related closures, you may be eligible to receive emergency unemployment insurance if:

- Your work hours have been reduced as a result of Coronavirus; or
- Your workplace closes temporarily and you are not compensated; or
- You have been instructed not to go to work and you are not being paid while at home.

The best way to file is online at [louisianaworks.net/hire](https://louisianaworks.net/hire)

If you need additional assistance, please call **1-866-783-5567** or **985-646-3940**.

**Job Postings**

This weekend, we launched **St. Tammany JOB CONNECT** as a clearinghouse of workforce and talent resources. We are working closely with Tri-Parish Works and GNO, Inc. on listing and sharing current job openings in St. Tammany and our region. If you are a St. Tammany business that needs immediate or temporary employees, please contact us at 985-809-7874 or visit us at [www.sttammanycorp.org](http://www.sttammanycorp.org)

St. Tammany Corporation is here to help our area businesses as we navigated these unprecedented times. Please call 985-809-7874 to be connected to a member of our economic development team. We are here to serve you.

**Chris Masingill, Chief Executive Officer, St. Tammany Corporation (End)**

