Flagler officials urge mask wearing, social distancing to curb COVID-19 cases as vaccination process continues

March 1, 2021 – Flagler County officials are urging residents to keep up their COVID-19 safety practices, such as mask wearing and social distancing, while the vaccination initiative pushes forward – locally and nationally – to protect as many people as possible from the potentially devastating effects of the virus.

“We have to use all of our tools together – masks, social distancing, and hand washing,” said Flagler County Commission Chairman Donald O’Brien. “The CDC and other public health experts will continue to monitor the situation and update recommendations as the situation changes.”

Last month was the one-year anniversary of the county’s convening of a pandemic working group that precipitated the ongoing public messaging campaign urging residents to follow CDC and Florida Department of Health guidelines in response to the ongoing spread of the new coronavirus.

“We have learned a lot about this virus after dealing with it this past year, and the best analogy I can come up with is that it’s like a tornado,” said Emergency Management Director Jonathan Lord. “It can be devastating for one person, and leave another unscathed. All of the CDC authorized vaccines have been shown to be effective in preventing severe disease that may result in hospitalizations and death – but until we get more shots into people’s arms, everyone needs to continue wearing masks, washing their hands, and maintaining social distancing from one another.”

A recurring question is, “Do I need to wear a mask and avoid close contact with others if I have been vaccinated?”

According to the CDC, yes.

To protect oneself and others, follow these recommendations:

- Wear a mask over the nose and mouth
- Stay at least 6 feet away from others
- Avoid crowds
- Avoid poorly ventilated spaces
• Wash hands often

“It’s important for everyone to continue using all the tools available to help stop this pandemic as we learn more about how COVID-19 vaccines work in real-world conditions,” the CDC website states. “Experts are also looking at how many people get vaccinated and how the virus is spreading in communities. We also don’t yet know whether getting a COVID-19 vaccine will prevent you from spreading the virus that causes COVID-19 to other people, even if you don’t get sick yourself.”

The CDC website also offers guidance for wearing masks:
• Wearing a mask protects others as well as oneself. Masks work best when everyone wears one.
• A mask is NOT a substitute for social distancing. Masks should still be worn in addition to staying at least 6 feet apart, especially when indoors around people who don’t live in a common household.
• Masks should completely cover the nose and mouth and fit snugly against the sides of the face without gaps.
• Masks should be worn when traveling on a plane, bus, train, or other form of public transportation traveling into, within, or out of the United States and in U.S. transportation hubs such as airports and stations.
• People age 2 and older should wear masks in public settings and when around people who don’t live in their household.
• Wear a mask inside the home if someone is sick with symptoms of COVID-19 or has tested positive for COVID-19.
• Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol after touching or removing a mask.
• Masks may not be necessary when outside away from others, or when within one’s common household family.

To find answers to other frequently asked questions about coronavirus vaccinations, visit the CDC website.

For the latest information on vaccine eligibility and to register for a vaccination appointment, please visit www.FlaglerCounty.org/covid for details. Those who do not have internet access should call the state appointment hotline at 866-201-1541. Registrants will be contacted in the order that they signed up.

For Flagler County residents who are 65 years old or older, and who are also medically homebound or require transportation assistance to the Flagler County Fairgrounds, please contact the Emergency Operations Center at 386-313-4200, or by email at EOC@FlaglerCounty.org to discuss available options.

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