

For Release Thursday 12/30/2021

County of Berks Press Alert

Berks County officials to reinstate local disaster emergency declaration in response to COVID-19 resurgence

Reading, PA— 12/30/2021 — County of Berks officials will be declaring a local disaster emergency for Berks County, effective today, to give the county the ability to respond as quickly as possible to resurgent COVID-19 issues. The disaster emergency declaration will allow the county, through its departments and agencies, to modify standard operational processes and expedite the ability to obtain necessary resources and make important emergency decisions.

Chief Administrative Officer Ronald Seaman stressed that the declaration is not a cause for alarm but the application of a legal mechanism that allows county government to mobilize quickly and effectively to respond to the current public health emergency. This action is in direct response to the sudden increase of COVID-19 cases and their impact on healthcare and the delivery of critical public safety and other government services throughout the county.

County officials declared a disaster emergency on March 12, 2020 at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic to position the county to best respond to the developing threat of COVID-19. At that time, the County had no reported cases of COVID-19, but officials wanted to be prepared for any scenario. That declaration was terminated on June 28, 2021, when it was evident the county could continue to execute its mission to serve the public under normal operating procedures.

Unfortunately, Berks County is experiencing another resurgence of COVID-19, with a pandemic high of 651 reported cases on Wednesday, December 29. This spike is straining key sectors throughout the community, including crucial Berks County departments that have already been affected by the pandemic and expect to experience even greater stresses as the need for services grows and available staff becomes limited due to illness or quarantine.

Given the current situation, County officials felt it was imperative to reinstate the disaster emergency declaration to allow the Berks County Department of Emergency Services to act to alleviate the effects of the emergency, aid in the restoration of essential public services and take any other necessary emergency response actions. The declaration states that Chief Administrative Officer Ronald Seaman and Emergency Management Coordinator Brian Gottschall will coordinate the County's emergency response and work with state and federal authorities to take the appropriate action needed to alleviate the effects of the emergency.

The declaration also reinstates the Berks County COVID-19 Leadership Council to advise the Chief Administrative Officer and County Emergency Management Coordinator related to the COVID-19 response. The council includes the Board of Commissioners, Chief Administrative Officer, Emergency Management Coordinator, Human Resources and Solicitor's Office.

###

For more information, press only:

Stephanie Weaver, Public Relations Officer

Office: 610-478-6136 x6112

Cell: 610-816-1242

Email: sweaver@countyofberks.com

www.DoYourPartBerks.com www.CountyofBerks.com