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**Volusia County announces phased reopening of beaches and library services**

Volusia County announced its next steps on Thursday for a gradual, phased-in reopening of county services and facilities, lifting restrictions on beach activities, opening a limited amount of additional off-beach parking and providing public access to library computers by appointment.

The new relaxed beach rules take effect this weekend, Volusia County Chair Ed Kelley announced during a news conference Thursday afternoon in which he emphasized the need for residents to continue to heed all COVID-19 health and safety guidelines.

“We ask the public to follow the rules put in place,” said Kelley. “After all, they’re there for your safety and protection.”

To prevent crowding, other than three beach vehicle ramps for handicapped access, all other beach ramps remain closed to vehicles. However, parking along county rights-of-way adjacent to the beach are open. Beachgoers have been required to engage in physical activity such as walking or jogging and then leave the beach when they were done. But beginning Saturday, those restrictions will be lifted and sitting, sunbathing and other activities will be permitted once again. To avoid the potential for person-to-person spread of the virus, groups on the beach will be limited to a maximum of six people and groups will be required to distance themselves by at least 10 feet from other groups.

The county also plans to open a limited number of additional off-beach parking provided that conditions on the beach remain favorable for social distancing. The number of available spots will largely depend on the volume of beachgoers near each parking area. Potential areas include the county’s coastal parks as well as Michael Crotty Bicentennial Park, Wisteria Road parking lot and Dahlia Avenue Park. Parking at these locations will be limited to prevent crowding on the beach. Lighthouse Point Park and Smyrna Dunes Park will also open Saturday at partial capacity. Despite the opening of the beaches to all activities, Kelley still urged residents in high risk categories to play it safe.

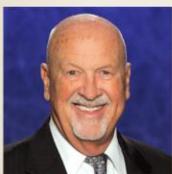
“I would like to reiterate what the Governor said yesterday regarding the higher risk population,” Kelley said. “Those of you that are the higher risk, if you have underlying medical conditions, if you feel that you’re not well, please stay home and limit your risk of exposure for your own benefit.”

Beginning Monday, nine of Volusia County’s libraries will begin offering public access to computers. Residents will need to call ahead to make an appointment. The computers will be available for one-hour time blocks at the following libraries:

- ✓ Daytona Beach Regional Library
- ✓ DeBary Public Library
- ✓ DeLand Regional Library
- ✓ Deltona Regional Library
- ✓ Dickerson Heritage Library
- ✓ Edgewater Public Library
- ✓ New Smyrna Beach Regional Library
- ✓ Ormond Beach Regional Library
- ✓ Port Orange Regional Library

The county’s libraries will continue to provide curbside materials pickup service.

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