



**\*\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\*\***

June 17, 2020

## **Health Department Reports Two Additional COVID-19 Deaths, Urges Mask Use for Protection**

HAMILTON COUNTY, TN - The Hamilton County Health Department regrettably reports two additional COVID-19 deaths today. The announcement brings the total number of Hamilton County resident deaths to 24.

"It is with sadness that we have to report these deaths today and our hearts go out to the families who are suffering these losses," said Health Department Administrator Becky Barnes, "We want to encourage our community to do everything we can to stop this virus and the resulting deaths it brings. Wearing a mask and social distancing must be a priority for all."

The individuals were two Hispanic males, one is in the 51-60 age-band, and the other is 61-70. Both had underlying health conditions.

According to the CDC, cloth masks can reduce the inhale or exhale of respiratory droplets produced by talking, coughing, or sneezing. Whether symptomatic or asymptomatic, masks reduce the transmission of COVID-19 from person to person.

A safe reopening of our county is dependent upon every resident responsibly wearing a mask.

Proper use of masks and cloth face coverings include:

- Covering both the nose and mouth, not just the mouth or on the chin.
- A snug fit all the way around with no gaps.
- Avoid touching the inside and outside.
- Wash masks regularly by machine or by hand with soap and warm water or a bleach solution.
- Masks should be worn any place where social distancing of 6 feet cannot be maintained.

The Health Department has received 198,000 masks Governor Bill Lee's Unified Command Group. As of June 17, they have distributed 146,401 masks to the public and have 51,599 remaining for free distribution.

The Health Department has made several bulk quantity distributions to organizations such as the Chattanooga Housing Authority for their residents, CARTA for their riders, and numerous churches, businesses and community organizations. Also, the Hamilton County courthouse will have bins of masks at the entrances.

The Health Department has also strategically targeted distribution efforts in areas heavily affected by the spread of COVID-19, such as grocery stores, restaurants, and our testing sites.

Free masks are available while supplies last for pick up at the 3rd Street Health Department Monday-Friday from 8AM-4PM and Saturday from 10AM-3PM.

To request bulk quantities of masks or for information about COVID-19, call the hotline at (423) 209-8383.

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