

COVID-19 Pandemic



The Impact

guidelines across the state. Although he closed schools for the remainder of the school year, he started re-opening businesses and approving outdoor dining at restaurants a month after shutting them down. He has never mandated the wearing of a mask in public spaces, leaving that decision to city governments to manage.

COVID-19 has an average two-week incubation period from the time of viral exposure. As McMaster approved the re-opening of businesses, including tourist attractions, by mid to late May, the number of cases rose. The graph below shows the rise starting the end of May, generally escalating through the summer months.

South Carolina was slow to start testing and continues to be ranked among the lowest in the United States for level of testing.

Impact in Horry County

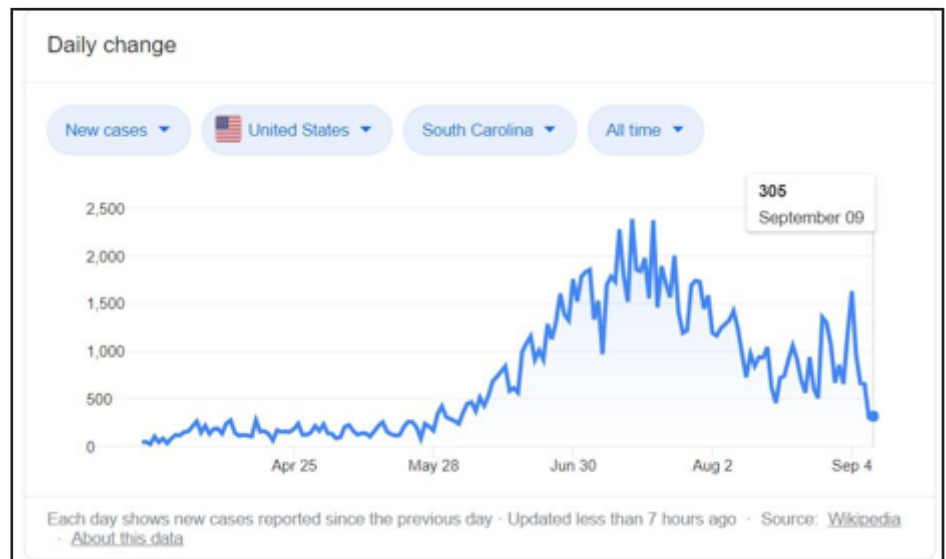
As we know, the Myrtle Beach area is heavily dependent upon tourism. Local businesses and restaurants get a knock-on effect when resort and hotel occupancy rates are high, especially during the summer months. The arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic in South Carolina severely

The response of a federal government to a pandemic, such as COVID-19, dictates how well it is contained and the mitigation of the economic impact. South Korea and New Zealand took action immediately with testing and contact tracing and the result was containment in a few months. Both countries were able to limit the economic impact and re-open their countries for business fairly quickly.

The United States, under the Trump administration, took a different approach. Donald Trump made the decision to downplay the severity until it was too late then refused to launch a coordinated federal response. In leaving it to governors, he abdicated his responsibility to protect the American people and turned it into a political football instead of a healthcare crisis. The U.S. continues to feel the effects of his decision almost eight months from when the first case was identified and we are nowhere close to seeing an end to the spread of this virus.

South Carolina Reacts

SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes the disease COVID-19, arrived in South Carolina on March 6. Governor Henry McMaster reacted fairly quickly to close schools, shut down non-essential businesses, including dine-in restaurants and implement social distancing



impacted tourism and, subsequently local businesses. Hotels were allowed to start accepting reservations mid-May. By the end of June, the peak occupancy rate was 78.5 percent. Rates then began to decline with a 29.2 percent drop for the week of July 4th compared to 2019.

The impact on businesses was widespread throughout Horry County, with the restaurant industry taking the biggest hit. Although restaurants were open for delivery or pick up, the limit on occupancy for dining in, along with declining tourist numbers over the summer, left them with fewer customers and significant loss of revenue. According to a Yelp report, 188 total businesses in the Myrtle Beach area were designated as closed between March 1 and July 10 and only 66 were still listed as only temporarily closed as of mid-July.

The personal impact is multifold. Permanent layoffs due to the closure of businesses or the loss of income due to temporary shut downs, such as those in the hospitality industry caused financial hardship for many across Horry County, with people at risk of losing their homes when they can't pay rent or mortgage, even when the moratorium is lifted.

As the 2020 school year begins, parents must be prepared for schools to be shut down without sufficient notice if DHEC determines there is a moderate to high risk. This may result in parents taking off work to home school children, possibly with loss of pay.

Loss of income has also seriously impacted those who are already financially challenged, especially single parent households. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in the expansion of food banks in Horry County and local food drives continue to be ongoing to help those in need.

Until people take this pandemic seriously and comply with CDC guidelines across the country, Horry County and South Carolina will continue to be at risk for new cases. We must all be diligent to get through this and be aware that we are doing the right thing for everyone, not just for ourselves.

Sources:

The information in this paper is taken from the following sources:

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