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Bars ordered closed in Riverside County in response to upswing in coronavirus cases

Public Health Officer Dr. Cameron Kaiser has ordered all bars in Riverside County closed to help slow the spread of coronavirus, which has seen a recent upswing in confirmed cases.

The order, which is effective Tuesday (June 30), comes on the heels of a recommendation from Gov. Gavin Newsom, who suggested Sunday that Riverside and seven other counties on a watch list close their drinking establishments. Newsom also ordered on Sunday that seven counties, including Los Angeles County, close their bars.

“People don’t social distance well after a couple drinks, and it’s one of the hardest environments to trace contacts in,” said Dr. Cameron Kaiser, Riverside County public health officer. “My hope is that this will be only temporary and further closures won’t be needed, but it all depends on what every one of us as a county do to slow more spread.”

Bars had been allowed to operate in Riverside County since June 12 as the region and state reopened the economy under accelerated stage two. But local and state health officials became concerned as the number of confirmed coronavirus cases started to grow, along with an increase in hospitalizations and ICU beds in use.

“Since mid-June, there has been a growing health crisis with rising coronavirus cases, hospitalizations and ICU bed usage throughout our nation, the State of California and here in Riverside County,” said Riverside County Board Chair and Fourth District Supervisor V. Manuel Perez. “A local Riverside County order on bar closures has unfortunately become necessary to slow the spread of this virus. I want to remind everyone that facial coverings are a requirement, and encourage continuously keeping physical distance and washing our hands.”

Restaurants, pubs and breweries that offer dine-in services may still offer alcoholic drinks, but only in the same transaction as a meal. If a bar offers meals, they are required to comply with the same industry guidance as restaurants.

In Riverside County, officials with the Department of Environmental Health will enforce the closure order, starting with reaching out to all impacted bars, pubs, breweries and restaurants to explain the order and impacts to their operations. Officials said they believe most bars will comply with the order, but those who do not may face additional action.

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