



Jewish Federation OF GREATER HOUSTON

June 23 PM - Jran Email

Dear Jran Community:

Today is the 50th Jran email I have sent out since March. My commitment to you is that I will continue sending Jran email update so long as they are helpful (as much as I love the sound of my own typing). If you find a resource is missing or have a hot tip for me, [please reach out](#) so I can include it. Jran is here for you and our community.

Additionally, the [Jran online tool kit](#) continues to be updated. We are [adding additional printable graphics](#), including floor decals, hand washing sequence, and mask signage.

COVID19

Yesterday, the [Harris County face mask order](#) went into effect for all *commercial* entities providing goods or services directly to the public. I have reached out for clarification if “commercial” applies to faith-based organizations and will update you when I have an answer. Other large cities and neighboring counties have implemented similar orders, including [Galveston](#).

Here is what the face mask order means:

- Commercial entity must develop, post and implement a health and safety policy
 - **Must** require all employees and visitors to that entity to wear a face covering when social distancing is not possible
 - Policy **may** require [other mitigating measures](#)
- Businesses **must** post the health policy in a conspicuous location so all entering are at notice
- Failure to comply by Friday, June 26th can result in a fine up to \$1,000 per violation
- Face coverings:
 - **Must** be worn by all people over age 10
 - **Must** cover nose and mouth
 - **May** be homemade mask, bandannas, or handkerchief, strongly recommended that the public not wear medical grade face masks or N95s
- Harris County residents should continue to maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet
- Face masks are not needed in the following situations:
 - Exercising outside, physical activity outside

- Driving alone or with members of same household
- If health is a risk factor to wearing a mask
- Pumping gas or operating other outdoor equipment
- When in a building that requires security screening (ex: banks)
- While eating or drinking

Face mask wearing has become a [hot button issue](#), but scientists agree that wearing a face covering when around others is the single most effective way to reduce the spread of COVID19, but *not a substitution for social distancing*. The face mask order comes at a pivotal time in Houston as positive cases of COVID19 are skyrocketing. We are currently at “[Level 2](#)” on the Harris County COVID-19 Threat Level System. This means we asked to minimize all contacts. We are getting closer to “Level 1” —stay home.

The Texas Medical Center is nearing capacity in its ability to treat hospitalized COVID19 patients. Across the 9 county TMC system, ICU beds are currently 83% occupied, with 24% COVID19 related and 59% non-COVID19. [Texas Children’s Hospital has begun admitting adult patients](#) and set up a special care unit for COVID19 at its West Houston Campus.

In the past week, the Greater Houston area has reported [three days of between 1,200-1,600 new cases](#). At our peak in April, we reported a single day of 811 cases. Not only are our testing sites becoming overwhelmed, but the positivity rate in Houston has tripled since the end of May. We went from a 3% positivity rate to 9%. The hospitalization rate for COVID19 patients doubled between May and today, from 1,600 new patients per day to 3,200 per day.

During the Mayor’s press conference yesterday, the area’s leading doctors reported that our city cannot maintain this growth trajectory. Additionally, there is concern that rapid growth of COVID19 patients limiting a hospital’s ability to care for other medical procedures could lead to a bankrupting of our area’s hospitals.

The news keeps getting grimmer across Houston’s public services. The [police and fire department are reporting record number of new cases](#) as well as those under quarantine. Of the 146 police officer who contracted COVID19, 52 have returned to work. An additional 103 officers are under quarantine. Our fire department is down 88 firefighters who are currently recovering from COVID19, with two in the hospital and one in the ICU. Ambulances are being used to transfer COVID19 patients from the full inner-city hospitals to suburban units with more capacity, taking those emergency vehicles out of service for hours as they wait to load, transport, and unload patients. This means less emergency vehicles on the road to respond to other types of critical care needs.



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The Mayor and County Judge have expressed frustration at the Governor's orders limiting their ability to implement stronger control measures for preventing the spread of COVID19. Which brings us to the Governor's press conference...

Yesterday, the Governor echoed the major cities' concern over the rapid growth trajectory of positive COVID19 cases. Today, [Texas is reporting over 5,400 new cases](#)—just today. The Governor took a [whole state approach](#) to managing COVID19, reporting that across Texas, hospital capacity seems to be under control. While this might seem comforting, let's not forget that [Texas is bigger than a lot of countries](#). With 29 million residents and a land mass larger than France, hospital beds in El Paso look a lot less appealing to those of us in Houston.

The Governor is [asking that people voluntarily do the right things](#): stay home, wear a mask when out in public, practice social distancing, and wash or sanitize your hands often.

Hurricane Season 2020

The Harris County Office of Emergency Management and FEMA have been working on plans for a hurricane during COVID19. FEMA is looking into contracts with area hotels for emergency shelters, as NRG will likely be used as an overflow hospital for COVID19. Additionally, social distancing concerns have led to the Red Cross requiring that shelters cut their capacity to 1/3 of occupancy. Other concerns that have yet to be addressed are how the Houston hospital system will manage a surge of COVID19 and the additional beds needed to take care of those needing care after a natural disaster.

The Federation is preparing in advance, and we encourage you to do the same. We have stocked up on face masks and are working on increasing our hand sanitizer stock in case we need to deploy to help our neighbors. More to come as this evolves. If you would like to be involved in preparing for a natural disaster during COVID19, [please email me](#).

Security

JRAN will be hosting a security training at the end of July with Brad Orsini, Senior National Advisor of the Secure Community Network. We will send more information and a save the date next week.

Zoom is [updating its encryption](#) and expanding full encryption to all users. Starting in July, Zoom will begin a beta test of end-to-end encryption (E2EE) across Zoom's free and paid platforms as an advance add-on feature. E2EE will limit a person's ability to use a landline phone (do those still exist?) and some conferencing software. Hosts can turn on and off E2EE as needed and group admins can turn it on or off for their whole group.

JRAN In the News (#HumbleBrag)

The Jewish Herald Voice [covered the most recent JRAN Conversation Starter](#) on Securing Our Jewish Institutions. You can read a recap of the webinar or [watch the recording online](#).

In Other News...

Rabbi Oren Hayon at Emanu El has come up with a [blessing for wearing a mask](#), adapted from Rabbi Michael Knopf. It is a great way to talk to kids about the importance of wearing a mask and a reminder that doing so is our way of keeping others safe and healthy—which is special and holy.

Take care and I hope you #MaskUpHou today and every day,

Jackie

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