



September 1 PM – JРАН Email

Dear JРАН Community:

Today, we will cover COVID19 testing trends, rental assistance, back to school anxiety webinar, updates on hurricane season, and safety and security webinars for the High Holidays.

COVID19

Labor Day weekend is approaching, which means parties, barbeques, and trips to the beach will be tempting. School openings depend on our continued diligence this holiday weekend, so it is important that we continue with social distancing, mask wearing, and hand washing as we march toward the fall.

The Houston region is continuing with the slow downward trend in positive cases. There are some [spikes in the official City and County data](#) due in large part to back logged cases. Harris County is reporting 768 new cases and 5 fatalities, the City of Houston is reporting 158 new cases and 8 new fatalities. The [positivity rate for Harris County is 10.1%](#), the City of Houston rate is 7.8%, and the [State of Texas rate is 10.13%](#). The goal is to get the 14-day positivity rate below 5% before schools reopen. As of yesterday, the [Harris County COVID-19 Risk Level Indicators](#) look promising, though we are still in the “red” zone.

The [Texas Medical Center is reporting](#) a slight increase in the effective reproduction rate ($R(t)$), indicating that the virus is spreading. Last week the $R(t)$ was 0.96 and today it is 1.08. We are continuing the downward trend in new cases with 1,188 new cases yesterday compared to 1,415 last week. The TMC positivity rate is 5.6%, the same as last week. And, finally, hospitalization rates continue to decline with 80 new patients yesterday, compared to 88 last week.

The [County Judge extended the Harris County mask order](#). It was set to expire on August 26th but the County Judge signed a new declaration for the mask order to expire 14 days after Governor Greg Abbott declares and end to the State of Texas Public Health Crisis.

Mayor Turner is encouraging everyone to get tested at any of the [free City locations](#) and to get your flu shot this year. Keeping the seasonal flu rate down will be critical as our hospitals continue to admit COVID-19 patients. Getting tested for COVID19, even if you are not experiencing symptoms, helps our health department know if the virus is spreading and it helps you know if you are an asymptomatic carrier. There has been a [lot of debate over some changes to the CDC guidelines](#) on asymptomatic testing, but at Dr. Marc Boom, president of Houston Methodist, put it on last week’s Faith Leaders call: it can’t hurt, it’s free, so why not?

The COVID-19 rental assistance program is still accepting applications due to lower than expected turn out. You can [apply through Baker Ripley](#). The Governor has extended [Emergency SNAP benefits](#) for the month of September. Eligible families will see additional funds on their Lone Star Card by September 15th.

A final reminder that the [Federation's Back to School Anxiety webinar](#) is tomorrow night at 8 p.m. We will have a panel of mental health experts taking your questions on stress that comes with going to school during the pandemic. We hope to "see" you there!

Hurricane Season 2020

Back in May, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) [predicted 2020 to be an above-normal hurricane season](#). NOAA's calculations provided for 13-19 named storms, 6-10 hurricanes, and 3-6 major storms. Now that Hurricane Laura has passed and [two more named storms have developed in the Atlantic](#) (spoiler: nothing to be worried about in Houston), let's look at where we are so far.

We have had 16 named storms, 4 hurricanes, and 1 major storm (Laura). For those keeping track, Hurricane Season runs from June 1st through November 30th, with September being the busiest time for the Gulf Coast. It is important to continue to follow the weather from [trusted sources](#) and make sure your [hurricane kit](#) is ready to go.

Our hearts go out to those impacted by Hurricane Laura. A big thank you to everyone who participated in the Federation's supply drive last Sunday. We collected supplies, food, and toiletries that are on their way to Louisiana today. For those who missed our Hurricane Laura drive, [you can still donate at the City of Houston's relief drives](#) around the city. Please be sure to read the supply needs and protocols implemented due to COVID19 before donating.

The near miss of Hurricane Laura for the Houston coast was a wake-up call in a way. Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo renewed the push for the [Federal government to invest in the "Ike Dike"](#) along Galveston Bay. This would act as our region's costal spine, helping to prevent devastating storm surges into Galveston and the ship channel.

Security

The Secure Community Network (SCN) is holding a series of "High Holidays Safety and Security Preparedness Webinars" in September. You must register in advance to attend. Here is a list of their upcoming resources:

- September 2nd: [Safety and Security Considerations for Outdoor Services and Gatherings](#)
- September 9th: [Personal Safety for Lay & Professional Leadership During the High Holidays](#)
- September 16th: [Cyber Preparedness for the High Holidays](#)

Additionally, SCN has a informative report called [Firearms and the Faithful](#). It is a thoughtful approach for those considering using congregants and lay leaders as part of their security strategy.

In Other News...

Earlier in the pandemic, we read about a person who made a [picnic table for his squirrel friends](#). Not to be outdone, a man in Ohio with clearly too much time on his hands and a strong affection for nuts and

squirrels, built “The Nutty Bar.” This full-service nut bar includes several varieties of nuts for your backyard friends. You can [take a virtual tour and watch how it’s made](#) on Duke Harmon’s Woodworking YouTube Channel. I’m afraid 2020 has raised our squirrel friend’s dining expectations dramatically...

Take care today and I hope you find time to spend in your garden,

Jackie

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