



Mayor Brindle's COVID-19 Update September 25, 2020



CONFIRMED CASES

- Today, there are 202,100 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in New Jersey to date, with another 340 still under investigation. Union County has reported 17,565 cases in total, with Westfield reporting two new cases since my last update on Tuesday (both on Thursday) -- bringing our total to 391 since our first reported case in March.
- For the seven cases reported in the official case count for the Town from September 18 - 24, we have the following details available from the Board of Health:
 - Two not yet received by the Health Department
 - Two who were household contacts of a positive case
 - One could not be reached (did not return calls)
 - One had known exposure
 - One in-state college student (living on campus)
- In terms of age breakdown, we have the following information on these seven cases:
 - Three cases were age 20-24
 - One case was age 30-35
 - One case was age 90-95
 - Two cases were age unknown

Regional Health Officer Megan Avallone reports that we continue to see, statewide, an increase in cases, transmission number and percent positivity rate -- all metrics that will be watched closely over the next few weeks. To date for September, 34 out of the 55 Westfield cases reported to the Health Department have been in individuals age 16-23.

- For a more detailed breakdown of statewide numbers, visit the NJ Department of Health COVID-19 Dashboard.

STATE UPDATES

- Today, Governor Murphy provided an update from the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, stating that initial unemployment claims increased to 24,633. In addition, roughly 1.4 million New Jerseyans have received benefits since the beginning of the pandemic, and 96% of those deemed eligible have received at least one payment.
- On the Motor Vehicle Commission front, the Governor announced that a basic driver's license can be renewed online, with no need to go in-person. The deadline has been extended for renewals on Commercial Driver's Licenses and Learner's Permits from March 1 to December 31, and there will be special Senior Citizens hours (2:00 PM to 4:00 PM every Tuesday and Thursday) for new and used car registrations. For full details, visit www.nj.gov/mvc.

LOCAL UPDATES

- I have a very disconcerting update from Chief Battiloro, who reports that there were three attempted residential burglaries early this morning to homes on Cherry Lane, the 1000 block of Wychwood Road, and the 800 block of Grant Avenue. Individuals attempted to find unlocked doors to residences with the apparent attempt to enter them. Entry was gained at a residence on the 500 block of Wychwood Road via an unlocked rear door, where items were stolen. Additionally, there was an attempt to burglarize a car on Cherry Lane, as well as a car burglary of the 800 block of Grant Avenue.
- The Mountainside Police Department also reported several vehicle and residential burglaries on streets just off of Mountain Avenue and north of Woodland Avenue, in proximity to Route 22.
- Above all, I am grateful that no residents or police officers were hurt. Thank you to everyone who submitted Ring videos to the Police Department, which confirmed that no homes were forcibly entered. That being said, this is obviously very disturbing and I want to assure everyone that the Westfield Police Department is taking this situation very seriously and will be employing all appropriate measures including enhanced patrolling and surveillance. While they do their part, I am asking once again for each one of you to do yours by locking your cars and your homes and report any and all suspicious activity to the police immediately, regardless of the time of day.
- I continue to receive questions about the voting procedure for the upcoming General Election on November 3. While the election is administered through the Union County Board of Elections, I want to ensure that we have an informed community so that everyone is aware of their options. First and foremost, this is primarily a vote by mail election in New Jersey, which means that every active, registered voter will receive a ballot in the mail. You may return that ballot in the following ways:
 - By mail (postmarked on or before 8:00PM on November 3 and received by the Union County Board of Elections on or before November 10)
 - By secure drop box, the closest one of which is located at the Fraser Building at 300 North Avenue (by 8:00PM on November 3). Drop boxes are under 24/7 camera surveillance and ballots will be picked up on a daily basis by a bipartisan team of Union County Board of Elections Employees.
 - By delivering it to the Union County Board of Elections (271 North Broad Street, Elizabeth), the Union County Clerk's Office (2 Broad Street, Room 113, Elizabeth), or the Union County Clerk's Office (300 North Avenue East, Westfield)
 - By delivering it to your polling place on Election Day (by 8:00PM on November 3)
- You may also vote in person at your polling place by provisional paper ballot only. Voting machines will be available for those with disabilities. Westfield's polling locations are listed on our website at westfieldnj.gov/election, and additional details about voter registration and election procedures can be found at <https://ucnj.org/boe>. The Town will continue to post reminders on social media over the coming weeks, and I encourage everyone to become familiar with the available options in order to make a plan to exercise your right to vote.

- Don't miss tomorrow's Free Market event at the South Avenue train station lot from 9:00AM - 2:30PM. There are still a few time slots open to browse the free goods, and the Green Team will take a limited number of walk-ins based on volume and maintaining public health protocols. For those who could not get a drop-off time slot, you may bring your donations from 2:30 - 3:00 PM, park in the lot and leave your items directly with the Green Drop truck. Thanks to the Green Team for organizing this event that reinforces our commitment to sustainability and re-use. For additional details, visit westfieldnj.gov/freemarket.
- As always, keeping everyone informed is one of my top priorities, and today marks the 100th COVID update I've issued since the pandemic began in March. I would be remiss if I didn't express my gratitude to our Public Information Officer, Kim Forde, who has worked tirelessly to pull together these updates, and as such has become a vital member of our Town's emergency response team -- along with Town Administrator Jim Gildea, Fire Chief Tony Tiller, Police Chief Chris Battiloro, and Health Director Megan Avallone. I have heard from countless residents who have praised our Town's proactive and transparent communications for making them feel informed and secure, and we have Kim to thank for that.
- I know that we are all COVID fatigued, and are grateful that many aspects of normalcy are slowly returning. That being said, COVID remains a very real concern as we pivot into the colder weather and increased indoor activities. Please continue to remain vigilant by wearing face coverings when near others and maintaining social distancing to help protect the community. Beginning next week, I will issue my typical COVID updates on Tuesdays only, and will aim to get a much shorter update out on Fridays that will strictly consist of any available data on new cases, to the extent it is available from the Health Department, and will add to that schedule if the need arises.

Let's please continue to all look out for one another -- by sticking to public health protocols and doing our part to secure our neighborhoods. Our sense of community is what makes Westfield such a special place.

And to our Jewish friends and neighbors who will observe Yom Kippur beginning on Sunday evening, I wish you a meaningful fast.