

From the desk of

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Executive Director updates Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District's Response to COVID-19

While our services here at the Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District have not been interrupted during this tragic pandemic, we have taken several steps over the past eight weeks to protect the health and safety of our staff and stakeholders. We've limited access to our lobby to appointments only, required our staff to telecommute and restricted discretionary inspections and travel. These practices have paid off and we're fortunate that our staff has remained healthy throughout this unprecedented time.

As the businesses and community members we serve evolve to continue to fight COVID-19 in new ways, so too will we evolve our operations to accommodate them. We believe we can do this in a way that continues to protect the health and safety of everyone we employ and engage.

Beginning May 18, District staff will be returning to the office but with numerous measures in place to continue to stave off the spread of the novel coronavirus. These measures are extensive and include requirements such as wearing face coverings while working, no meetings of more than four people and maintaining six feet of distance from others at all times.

Equally important is how this translates to our interaction with the public and our permit holders. We will continue to keep our lobby doors locked until further notice but encourage those who need to do business with us in person to call 760.245.1661 to schedule an appointment. You may also call from outside the lobby to describe your needs and our staff will offer the appropriate direction. Inspections will resume as normal, but please be respectful of our staff and keep the proper social distancing.

We will continue to limit other discretionary travel for our staff as well as bar outside organizations from using our facilities for meetings to further limit potential exposure. We are as anxious as anyone to lift these restrictions, but as a regulatory agency that serves the public and local business community we must hold ourselves to the highest standard when it comes to health and safety. We hope you understand and support our efforts as well as the efforts of other public agencies throughout our communities as we move past this pandemic.

The High Desert and Palo Verde Valley are tight-knit communities. We are strong. We have weathered recessions and housing downturns. And though we are often grouped in with the Inland Empire or Coachella Valley in Palo Verde's case, we know that our fortitude and strength is as different as our geography. It is a unique place to live and work. This pandemic will further prove that, and the Mojave Desert Air Basin and its communities will be stronger when this is all over. I'm confident of that.

We will continue to adjust our operations as the situation evolves. The safety and health of our staff and stakeholders remain our top priorities when making those decisions. We will continue to update this message as necessary to ensure that communities and permit holders know how best to carry out business with the District.

I want to thank our staff, our residents and our businesses for being adaptive and patient as we all navigate these challenges as a community. We appreciate your understanding as we continue to develop and implement rapidly evolving policy enhancements and work practice improvements to ensure that our services continue to be available.

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MOJAVE DESERT AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

BRAD POIRIEZ, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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