

Mayor Dan Toland
Video update transcript
July 14, 2020

Hi, Mayor Dan here. Hope everyone is healthy, happy, and enjoying the typical western Wisconsin summer. I know I waited six long winter months for it! I hope everyone is taking advantage of the parks and trails throughout the city. Not to mention some kayaking or fishing on the Kinni. There is a lot to see and do in River Falls. We are very lucky to live in a place with ample, convenient access to safe outdoor activities. So, remember that it's all yours to enjoy and appreciate.

Now, I would like to catch you up on some COVID-19 case numbers. This week, I have added the current cases to our graph – in addition to the total cases for the counties and state. I am also adding the “activity level” assigned by the state to each county. For more about what it all means, visit the webpage on your screen below.

Here is what is happening in Pierce County. Currently, there are 29 active cases, an increase of 14 from last week. You can see that total cases are now at 110 and that the county's activity level is high.

Pierce County	July 6	July 13	Change
Cumulative confirmed cases	79	110	+31
Active cases	15	29	+14
Recovered cases	64	91	+27
Negative cases	2,846	3,235	+389
Deaths	0	0	No change
Activity level	High	High	No change

In St. Croix County, there are 158 active cases, an increase of 47 from last week for a total of 301 cases. Like Pierce County, St. Croix County's activity level is also high. You will also notice that, unfortunately, there has been a new death in the county.

St. Croix County	July 6	July 13	Change
Cumulative confirmed cases	236	301	+65
Active cases	111	158	+47
Recovered cases	125	148	+23
Negative cases	6,623	7,667	+1,044
Deaths	1	2	+1
Activity level	High	High	No change

One thing I've heard is that these numbers are higher because there has been more testing. Actually, in Pierce County, testing numbers have decreased slightly as cases go up. In the state, while testing has increased, the percentage of confirmed cases has increased at a higher rate.

You will see in this next slide that there are nearly 7,450 active cases in the state, with a total of 820 deaths statewide.

State of Wisconsin	July 6	July 13	Change
Cumulative confirmed cases	31,500	36,942	+5,442
Active cases	4,946	7,447	+2,501
Recovered cases	25,758	28,670	+2,912
Negative cases	601,012	659,479	+58,467
Deaths	796	820	+24

In the past, I have talked about “gating” criteria. Along with our county health officials, we continue to monitor our gating criteria and the status of them ... particularly decreases in COVID-like cases reported in the state as well as adequate hospital capacity statewide.

On this last slide, I want to share some of our local and regional criteria, which will continue to be refined moving forward. They include adequate supplies of PPEs for City staff; our area’s testing capacity; public health capabilities for contact tracing; and the number of hospital beds available for COVID-19 cases within the Wisconsin portion of our region. You can see that we are currently meeting the criteria in these areas.

Local/regional	July 6	July 13
Adequate PPE supplies for staff	Yes	Yes
City/regional testing capacity	Yes	Yes
Case contact within 24 hours (Pierce County)	Yes	Yes
Close contact tracing within 24 hours (Pierce County)	Yes	Yes
Immediate bed availability (Northwest Healthcare Emergency Readiness Coalition)	n/a	31% availability

A few of our local businesses have been affected by positive COVID cases. We all hate to see any of our businesses that have to close because of this. I know that those businesses that have experienced recent closures have been working closely with public health officers to implement guidelines and procedures to further protect their workers, their patrons, and our community.

Of course, you can help keep our businesses open and operating by following some simple health guidelines including washing your hands and practicing social distancing. And, when you can't do that, please wear a mask.

Now, let's talk about masking. I have received a number of calls and emails from residents requesting that we issue a mandate that masks be worn in all public places. I want you to know that we have been monitoring this issue very carefully and keeping a close eye on the handful of Wisconsin municipalities who have passed or are considering masking ordinances. The Council will discuss masking options at its July 28 meeting. As always, the public is welcome and invited to be heard.

Even the communities passing ordinances have concerns about the practicality of enforcing them. I, personally, don't think it is as easy as just passing a mask ordinance and expecting that everything will improve. But, I am open to listening and discussing with the City Council on steps we could take. I continue to believe we need the members of the community to decide for themselves that taking the simple steps of wearing a mask and practicing social distancing can help make sure our businesses stay open and we can get our schools through the upcoming school years.

Due to the high virus activity level for our counties, the Library Board met last night and decided not to move forward with opening the library to walk-in service for now. I think this was a thoughtful and measured response to our current situation, and I commend the board for their decision. I know our library is the heart of our community and an important place for both learning and interacting. We will continue to work with county health officers and library staff and board moving forward. In the meantime, please continue to utilize the library's curbside and online services. There are still many virtual resources and activities to keep the whole family busy this summer.

Before I sign off, I want to give you a couple more City updates:

Even during this pandemic, I am happy to tell you that housing, economic development, and infrastructure projects continue to move forward throughout the City.

To see the latest activity, visit riverfalls.org/developmentmap. This relatively new mapping program will take you on an interactive tour of building and remodeling projects around the City. For best results, I suggest that you view the program on your desktop computer or something with a good size screen.

Lastly, I want to share that the City has signed the final contract approving Allina Health Services as our new EMS and ambulance provider. I want to thank our staff for two years of hard work making this difficult, but necessary, decision. I also want to thank them and the EMS Advisory Board for working to create a contract that retains the quality and quantity of our current services, while adding new services that we could only get with a larger organization. I look forward to a smooth transition as we reach our Jan. 1, 2021, contract implementation date.

See you next week. In the meantime, if you have questions or comments, please send them to me at dtoland@rfcity.org.