Coronavirus in El Paso: Case total reaches 451, one new death reported

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UTEP Safety Specialist Ray Lozano III is fit-testing masks for healthcare workers El Paso Times

A seventh person has died from the coronavirus, El Paso health officials said Thursday.

The latest death involves a man in his 60s with underlying health conditions, officials said.

El Paso health officials reported 58 new COVID-19 cases Thursday, bringing the total case count to 451. That is the largest daily case increase since El Paso County reported its first case on March 13.
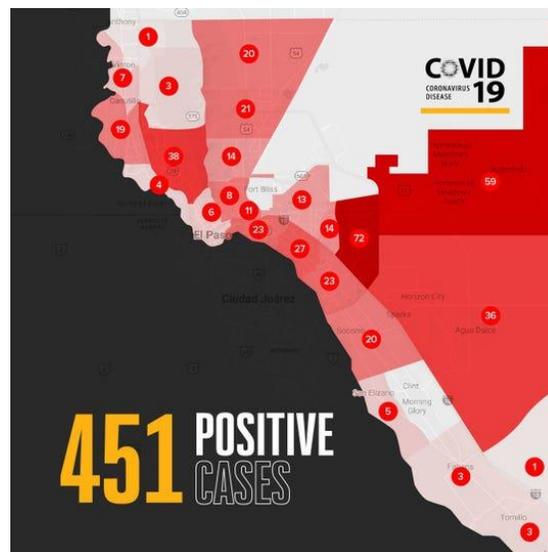
The El Paso Department of Public Health reported 451 positive COVID-19 cases in the county as of April 16. Of those, 62 had recovered. *(Photo: Courtesy City of El Paso)*

The large increase in cases is partly due to increased testing, officials said.

Approximately 5.9 per 1,000 El Paso County residents have been tested for COVID-19, the city said in a news release. The city's Department of Public Health estimates more than 5,000 COVID-19 tests have been conducted to date. The majority of those were conducted at private laboratories, with only 1,028 of the total tests done by the public health department's lab.

"As much as we wish we were, we are not at a point in time where we are able to test the entire population," said Dr. Hector Ocaranza, the health authority for the city and county. "We are still being strategic about how we test, focusing on at-risk populations, such as the elderly and those with underlying medical conditions."

Results were pending Thursday for 31 tests.

Forty-eight COVID-19 patients were hospitalized Thursday, and of those, 10 were in intensive care units, city data show. Three patients were on a ventilator.

More: How many ventilators does El Paso have? And is that enough?

Sixty-two of the 451 cases have recovered, the city said.

The six previous deaths also involved patients with prior health conditions. Five of those patients were men, one of whom was in his 50s, two of whom were in their 70s and one in his 80s. A female patient in her 70s also died.

City of El Paso
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The number of positive COVID-19 cases has increased to 451. We are now reporting an additional COVID-19 death bringing the total number of deaths to 7.

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About 62% of the county's cases are under the age of 50, and about 119 cases are under the age of 30.

Across the border, there were 82 COVID-19 cases in Juárez as of Thursday, health officials for the state of Chihuahua said. Twenty people have died in Juárez due to the virus.

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Enforcement of 'stay home' order to increase

The city said Thursday it was modifying the process to report violations of the "Stay Home, Work Safe" order to increase enforcement.

Residents who call 311 to report violations of the local order will receive "real-time response from enforcement officials," the city said in the release. Police will respond to homes and apartments and fire marshals will respond to reports of businesses operating outside the restrictions.

More: It's been 30 days since COVID-19 reached El Paso; here's the latest on stay-at-home rules

As of Tuesday, law enforcement had issued 683 warnings and 17 citations, El Paso Fire Chief Mario D'Agostino said.

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The change in the reporting process was prompted in part by noncompliance with the order over the recent Easter weekend that officials believe will result in a "sharp increase in cases in the coming days and weeks," the release said.

The stay-at-home order is in effect locally through May 17.