



COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions

Updated July 21, 2020

City information and resources

Q: Where can I find the most up-to-date information about COVID-19-related City services; county/state/national stats and resources; and virus mitigation guidelines for work and home?

The City's [COVID-19 webpage](#) has all this information and more.

Q: Where can I find resources in River Falls to help me, my family, my organization or business access emergency or other needed community/county/state/federal services?

The [Community Care website](#) hosted by the River Falls Public Library has a repository of helpful links and resources for community members seeking information or in need of emergency services.

City services

Q: Is City Hall open? What about the other City buildings?

City Hall is open Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday hours are 8 a.m. to noon to allow for additional cleaning and disinfecting. Many city staff will continue to work remotely, so it is advisable to call ahead if you expect to see a particular person. Visitors to City Hall are required to wear masks and observe social distancing guidelines.

Q: Which services can I access online or via telephone?

Via the City website's [Form Center](#) residents can apply for utility service, terminate utility service, submit a plea for a Municipal Court citation, apply for a right-of-way permit, or file a police report. City businesses can also apply for the River Falls Recovery Revolving Loan online.

The City's [Services Page](#), residents can pay their utility bills, apply for dog licenses, access election information, learn more about garbage and recycling services, and get information about many of the other City departments/locations.

Call City Hall at 715-425-0900 if you are unable to locate the information you need online. While City staff are unable to take applications over the phone, they can help direct you to the information you need.

Q: What help can I get for utility bills?

If you meet certain household income guidelines, energy assistance is available from both Pierce County and St. Croix County. Pierce County residents can call Pierce County Energy Assistance at 715-273-6788. St. Croix County residents can call WestCap at 800-606-9227 or 715-265-2471; ext. 1324.

Other organizations that can help with utility bills include Salvation Army at 715-307-7750, Heat Share at 1-800-264-6412, and Assistance and Resource Center (ARC) at 715-338-0755.

Q: How can I arrange a payment plan with the City to catch up on my utility bills?

The Wisconsin PSC will lift the disconnection moratorium on utility payments as of July 25. If you have delayed your utility payments as a result of the disruptions caused by the virus and have not yet made payment arrangements with the City, consider doing it as soon as possible. We would be happy to work with you to avoid disruption to your service. Call 715-425-0900.

Q: When will the Library be open?

The River Falls Public Library Foundation Board met July 13, 2020, and decided not to reopen the library until the area moves from a “high” level of COVID-19 activity to a “medium” or “low” activity level. [Curbside pickup](#) of library materials is available. Follow the Library [webpage](#) for updates regarding the facility and library programs.

Q: How do I access the Police Department?

The Police Department lobby will remain closed to walk-in traffic with services available by appointment. Community members can call the police department or use the [contact form](#) on the City website for their non-emergency needs and queries at 715-425-0909.

Q: What PPE requirements do City workers who I meet with/encounter must follow?

City staff are expected to follow the latest guidelines provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Wisconsin Department of Health Services. Currently, these recommendations include wearing a mask and maintaining adequate social distancing. Public safety departments utilize additional measures when responding to different emergency scenarios.

Q: What is the City’s recommendation about masking?

The City recommends following the CDC’s guidance that “cloth face coverings fashioned from household items or made at home from common materials at low cost can be used as an additional, voluntary public health measure.” The City Council will discuss masking advisory options at its meeting on July 28. Check the City’s website for [agenda information](#).

Q: How can I be safe during the upcoming elections?

The safest way to vote in upcoming elections is by using absentee ballots; you will help to reduce crowding on Election Day and decrease the risk of spreading the COVID-19 virus to residents and poll workers. Absentee ballots can be mailed back to City Hall with a provided postage-paid envelope, or they can be dropped in one of the locked drop boxes at City Hall up until Election Day. Absentee ballots for both the Aug. 11 Partisan Primary and the Nov. 3 General Election can be requested online at [myvote.wi.gov](#).

Parks and Recreation

Q: How do I find out about summer rec programming?

The River Falls Park and Recreation [Facebook page](#) will post updates as they become available. If you have registered for a program that is cancelled, you will be notified by Park & Rec staff and receive a full refund. For more information, call 715-426-3420.

Programming status as of July 21, 2020:

- The Glen Park pool is currently not planned to open to the public for open swim.
- Registrations for swim lessons and lap swimming are open. Visit riverfalls.activityreg.com for more information.
- The splash pad is open from 9 a.m.-8 p.m. daily. Please go [here](#) for COVID-19-related guidelines and other information.
- The City will not be organizing team sports, like T-ball and baseball, this summer. Full refunds will be issued to those who have already signed up.
- Limited classes and day camps are currently being offered.
- The City is not accepting reservations for City-owned sporting facilities and fields. Community members are welcome to use our fields and courts for household member and small group recreational activities, while adhering to social distancing guidelines.

Community guidance

Q: Can I have a garage sale?

While there are no orders against having garage sales, our county public health departments do not currently recommend hosting or attending these sales. However, if you choose to participate, remember to consider exposure risks associated with group activities, including garage/yard sales, and the potential harm our communities. Click here for more information: [Garage Sale Guidance](#)

Q: How many people can gather outside?

On June 2, Pierce County published their COVID-19 Safe Summer Events Checklist, and recommend keeping outdoor gatherings to 50 attendees or less. They also note that if guests can't be at least 6 feet apart, you should reduce your numbers to ensure safe distancing. Indoor gatherings are still recommended to keep to 10 or under. Click here to see the entire document [Pierce County COVID-19 Safe Summer Events Checklist](#).

Local enforcement

Q. What should I do if I see large gatherings at the dog park or playgrounds and people aren't maintaining good social distances?

If you believe there is an actual emergency, contact the Police Department at 715-425-0909. However, if it appears to be a large group gathering without danger of immediate injury, it is not recommended to confront other citizens. Each person's actions can help to break community transmission. Even though others around you may not be following ideal physical distancing guidelines, you can still do your part by avoiding these gatherings and not interacting with the group.

"Crushing COVID-19" plan

Q: Where can I find the Crushing COVID-19 plan?

[Crushing COVID-19](#): A guide to recovery can be found on the City's [COVID-19 webpage](#).

Q: How do you know when the City can move from one phase of the plan to the next?

The City is currently in Phase II of its reentry plan, "Crushing COVID-19." Follow the City's [Facebook page](#) or [website](#) for updates regarding movement toward Phase III. Note that it is also possible to move 'backward,' in the event of a large outbreak or other factors.

Q: Is the plan enforceable?

The plan is intended to serve as a guide for how the City will manage its municipal operations, programs, and facilities. The City expects the public to self-monitor and follow best practices for the health of our community.

Q: If there are large outbreaks in River Falls, does the City have the power to close restaurants and bars?

As mentioned in the [Crushing COVID-19 plan](#), and in consultation with public health officials, the City may implement additional measures or restrictions due to local impact(s) as the Mayor deems necessary and approved by the City Council.

Case data

Q: Why can't I find out how many COVID-19 cases there are in River Falls?

Because the City of River Falls is adjacent to several townships, counting cases within the City limits does not provide valuable information. Any outbreaks within the City will be reported to contain the spread from that outbreak. Visit the [St. Croix County](#) and [Pierce County](#) websites to check COVID-19 statistics for our region.

Q: What is the difference between “confirmed” and “probable” cases?

Patients with confirmed cases have had their cases confirmed via physical specimen testing. Patients with probable cases are identified by having been in close contact with a confirmed case, have symptoms, but have not been tested.

Q: How does the state measure the virus activity level for each county?

The state has created a [new data dashboard](#) to help counties monitor COVID-19 activity levels and response. The dashboard is updated each Wednesday.

The “count” is the number of currently confirmed cases. “Burden” is the rate of new cases per 100,000 residents over the previous two weeks. The “trajectory” is the percentage change in confirmed cases over the same time period.

The “activity level” is determined by both the burden and trajectory indicators based on whether the burden status is low, moderate, moderately high, or high, and whether trajectory status is significantly shrinking, growing, or have no significant change.

Currently, both St. Croix County and Pierce County have high activity levels.

COVID-19 testing

Q: Where can I get tested?

You can get tested at any of [these area facilities](#) (*scroll down on page*).

Contact tracing

Q: What is contact tracing?

In contact tracing, public health staff work with a patient to help them recall everyone with whom they have had close contact during the timeframe while they may have been infectious. These contacts are provided support and information to understand their risk and what they should do protect themselves and others.

The CDC has published a contact tracing informational [booklet](#). For the most up-to-date CDC guidance on contact tracing, click [here](#).

Q: Who does contact tracing?

County health departments conduct contract tracing. The health officials solicit additional contact tracing assistance from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services if needed.

Q: What is the difference between quarantine and isolation?

The CDC provides these definitions:

Quarantines are for people or groups who don't have symptoms but were exposed to the sickness. A quarantine keeps them away from others, so they don't unknowingly infect anyone.

While it serves the same purpose as quarantine, **isolation** is reserved for those who are already sick. It keeps infected people away from healthy people to prevent the sickness from spreading.

Business information

Q: Is River Falls going to require downtown businesses to follow the details laid out in the Pierce County Public Health Advisory of May 15?

The City is contacting each business to reinforce our recommendation to follow CDC and county guidelines regarding sanitation and social distancing. Many businesses are following these guidelines and it is greatly appreciated.

Q: Who at the City should businesses contact for information on what they can and cannot do?

The River Falls Chamber of Commerce has [resources](#) designed for businesses to help take steps to care for their team, create and deploy a contingency plan, provide resources for business financial relief, and more.

Q: Are the "rules" different for businesses in the St. Croix County part of the City than the Pierce County part of the City?

No, at this point there are no different guidelines between the two counties.

Q: Can a store or restaurant/bar require me to wear a mask?

Yes. A business has the right to refuse service to any customer who does not follow their posted policy. They may not, however, discriminate against someone who cannot wear a mask because they have a disability or are a member of a protected class.

Q: What should I do if I think a business is creating a public health risk through their actions or inactions?

The county public health office is the best resource to discuss this with. Contact the health office for the county that the business is located in.

Municipal/state powers

Q: Is the City going to make an ordinance specific to the City because the counties' recommendations are not law?

As mentioned in the [Crushing COVID-19 plan](#), the City may implement additional measures or restrictions due to local impact(s) as the Mayor deems necessary and approved by the City Council. It may also help provide definition to some areas left unclear by future state orders or where local enforcement is involved.

Q: Why isn't the City enforcing (masks/social distancing/making sure stores can open/whatever)?

At this time, the City is relying on its citizens and visitors to voluntarily wear masks and adhere to recommended social distancing and hygiene procedures. Individual businesses can post their own statements regarding mask usage, social distancing, and building capacity for their specific businesses.

Q: What powers do the DHS, counties, and City have regarding issuing and enforcing orders?

The county health officials have powers and authority to issue orders that are reasonably necessary to prevent the spread of disease and illness. Under the City's emergency declaration, the Police Chief and Mayor both have certain authority to issue emergency orders for the greater good in terms of public safety, health, and welfare.

Health and prevention

Q: Where can I get tested if I am experiencing COVID-19 symptoms?

For providers that do testing in the Pierce and St. Croix area click [here](#).

Q: Where can I find the latest health and prevention information?

- [City of River Falls](#)
- [Community Care resources](#)
- [211 Wisconsin](#)
- [Pierce County \(website\)](#)
- [Pierce County \(Facebook\)](#)
- [St. Croix County \(website\)](#)
- [St. Croix County \(Facebook\)](#)
- [Wisconsin Department of Health Services](#)
- [Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#)