

Knysna declared a coronavirus hotspot

Executive Mayor Elrick van Aswegen confirmed that, with a current total of 95 known positive cases of coronavirus infection, Knysna was identified as a ‘hotspot’. “This was reported during a meeting of the Local Joint Operation Centre held on 17 June,” he said. “The Garden Route District Municipality as a whole has been declared a hotspot, and is one of five districts that have been identified as such within the Western Cape.”

Government defines a ‘hotspot’ as a district with more than five cases per 100 000 persons. ‘Areas of vigilance’ have less than five cases per 100 000 people, as do ‘emerging hotspots’ – but these are characterised by a rapid rise in new cases. In hotspot areas, districts will be subdivided into ward clusters to allow for a more targeted and rapid response. These include deploying teams of health experts to analyse and support districts; extreme social distancing measures (including working from home); strict health protocols; and a phased-in approach to return to work.

“Hard lockdown will only be considered if all other measures fail to contain the spread,” said van Aswegen. “The truth is that the only way in which we can contain the spread, is to act responsibly and treat this virus with the absolute caution it dictates. Level three of lockdown does not mean that we can all return to our normal lives. We have to make peace with the fact that the coronavirus has created a new normal for us. And we must be actively vigilant against its spread.”

“To paraphrase President Ramaphosa, it is down to each of us to decide if we will undergo the devastation that so many countries have suffered,” he said. As individuals, families and communities it is my and your responsibility to spare our people, our society and our economy from the worst effects of this pandemic. We cannot afford to let our guard down now.”

Other measures implemented in hotspots include the standard interventions in place in areas of vigilance and emerging hotspots. Here government hopes to prevent new infections and to keep numbers low by establishing multi-sectoral, multidepartment and community response teams to encourage the various protocols. These include social distancing; frequent environment cleaning; symptom screening; community and contact tracing; testing, isolation, quarantine and hospitalisation; and hand hygiene practices, the wearing of cloth masks and cough etiquette.

“We know how easy it is to defend ourselves – and each other from this virus,” he concluded. “Wash your hands regularly. Wear a facemask when you go outside and keep at least 1,5m from other people. Avoid touching your face and regularly clean surfaces that you touch often. Please endure the social discomforts a while longer - I believe that it is better to actually be alive than it is to have a social life.”

ENDS
