

Marathon County Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)  
 Situational Report October 5, 2020 (12 Noon)  
 Joan Theurer, Health Officer

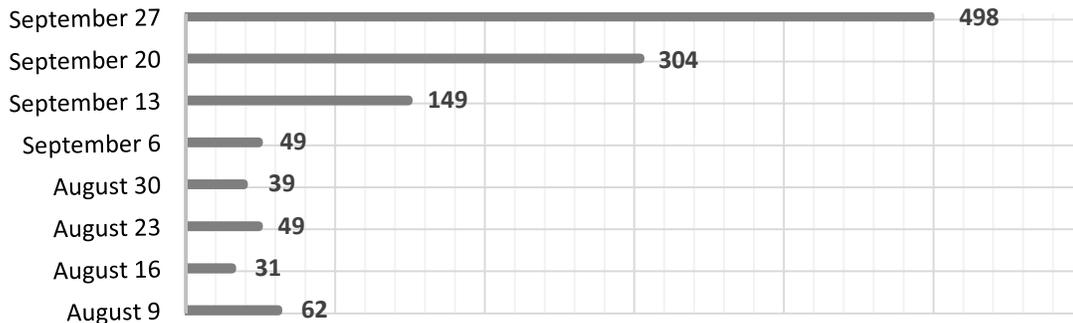
What we Know

COVID-19 is a disease caused by a virus strain that began spreading in people in December 2019. Health experts are concerned because little is known about this new respiratory virus. On March 11, 2020 the COVID-19 outbreak was characterized as a pandemic by the World Health Organization.

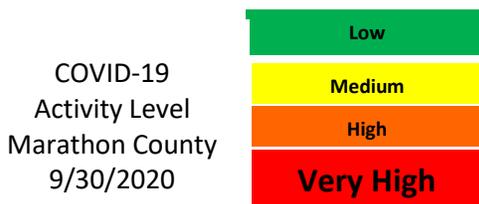
For the week of ending on October 3,

- [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#) reports 7,310,625 cases in the U.S. and 208,114 deaths.
- [WI Department of Health Services](#) reports 130,782 cases in WI, 105,373 (80.6%) recovered, 7,588 (5.8%) ever hospitalized, and 1,372 (1%) deaths. The seven day average of the percent of positive is 17.5%. Total [hospital bed utilization](#) in WI is 81.8%. Refer to [state summary date and county level data](#). Wisconsin ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> in the U.S. for the number of new cases in the last 7 days, following Texas (No. 1) and California (No. 2).
- [Marathon County](#) reports 1,810 cases, 992 (54.8%) recovered, 110 (6%) ever hospitalized, and 16 deaths (0.9%). 21,545 residents have tested negative for COVID-19. The fourteen day average of percent of positive is 11.9%. Total bed utilization in the North Central region is 77%. Refer to [Marathon County COVID-19 Dashboard](#). As one gets older, risk for severe illness from COVID-19 increases. Other factors that increase risk for severe illness are individuals with underlying medical conditions.

Number of New Cases in Marathon County by Week



WI Department of Health Services has Marathon County's [COVID-19 activity level](#) as very high. The activity level is based on the number of new cases in the past two weeks and percent change from the previous to the current week.



Individuals, businesses, and other entities can reduce their risk for exposure by practicing physically distancing and avoid large gatherings, wear a face covering when indoors and in public, wash hands frequently, and stay home if sick.

Strategies being carried out to control the spread of COVID-19 in Marathon County and counties across Wisconsin include: harm reduction behaviors, surveillance activities, and “boxing the virus in”. Controlling the spread of COVID-19 is critical in keeping schools and businesses open.

**Harm reduction** behaviors are actions everyone can take to reduce their risk in being exposed to COVID-19:

- Watch your physical distance around others and avoid large gatherings,
- Wear a mask when you are not at home and indoor spaces or unable to physically distance,
- Wash your hands frequently, and
- Stay home when sick.

Wisconsinites are being asked to [wear face coverings](#) as a way to slow and prevent the spread of COVID-19 virus. Refer to [Marathon County COVID-19 Order #1](#) for additional actions individuals, families, businesses, and other entities can do to reduce the risk for COVID-19.

**Surveillance** is the collecting data to inform health departments how quickly the virus is spreading in communities, who is being infected, and the severity of the virus. Data is important for two reasons: to monitor for warning signs in a surge in cases, and to determine the level of risk for exposure in a county.

**“Boxing it in”** is a containment strategy to control the spread of the virus and suppress a surge in cases. To “Box in the virus”, health care providers and local health departments working to:

- Test every individual who has symptoms of COVID-19,
- Isolate individuals with COVID-19,
- Find everyone who had close contact to infected people, and
- Quarantine all close contacts.



Marathon County has seen a steep surge of COVID-19 positive cases. As result, the demand for testing has strained our health care systems. The Marathon County Health Department has implemented the WI Department of Health Services Contact Tracing Crisis Standards, having schools and employers do notification of contacts. Residents waiting for a call or letter with isolation guidance are being advised to isolate at home and inform those who had close contact.

## Major Developments

### U.S.

CDC updates for the week of September 27,

[COVID-19 Science Update released: September 29, 2020](#)

[COVID-19 Forecasts: Deaths](#)

[COVID-19 Forecasts: Hospitalizations](#)

[Testing, Screening, and Outbreak Response for Institutions of Higher Education](#)

[Interim Guidance for Case Investigation and Contact Tracing in Institutions of Higher Education](#)

[Changing Age Distribution of the COVID-19 Pandemic – United States, May-August 2020](#)

[COVID-19 Trends Among School-Aged Children – United States, March 1-September 19, 2020](#)

[Multiple COVID-19 Clusters on a University Campus – North Carolina, August 2020](#)

[Recent Increase in COVID-19 Cases Reported Among Adults Aged 18-22 Years – United States, May 31-September 5, 2020](#)

[Early Release: Case Series of Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Adults Associated with SARS-CoV-2 Infection: United Kingdom and United States, March-August 2020 Cases in the U.S.](#)

## Wisconsin

On September 25, WI Department of Health Services published [Rescinded: DHS Essential Visitor Guidance for Nursing Homes](#)

On September 25, 27 WKOW.com published [GOP Senator calls for session to end mask order](#)

On September 26, WI Department of Health Services released new social media resource [If you've had close contact](#) and a message from Governor Evers [It's on all of us to keep our communities healthy and safe](#)

On September 28, WI Department of Health Services published [Important Updates – DHS COVID-19 Response Team Working to Support CMS Testing Requirements in Nursing Homes](#)

On September 28, WUWM 89.7 Milwaukee's NPR published [Marquette Study Shows Mask Mandates are Necessary to Slow the Spread of COVID-19](#)

On September 28, the Harvard Business Review published [How to Build Rapport ... While Wearing a Mask](#)

On September 29, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel published [Plan to deploy National Guard statewide for coronavirus testing shifts resources from Milwaukee, Madison](#)

On September 29, the Wisconsin Public Radio published [Wisconsin's September COVID-19 spike 'couldn't have come at a worse time'](#)

On September 29, the Wisconsin Public Radio published [Gov. Evers Calls on Public to Avoid Gatherings as Wisconsin's COVID-19 Cases Continue to Rise](#)

On September 29, 7 WSAW-TV published [DHS, central Wisconsin health officials urge cancelling all non-essential activities as COVID-19 surge continues](#)

On September 29, the Wisconsin Public Radio published [Evictions Damage Public Health. The CDC Has Banned Them – For Now](#)

On September 29, Channel 3000 published [New study shows roughly 1.6% of Wisconsinites had COVID-19 antibodies in July](#)

On September 29, Up North News published ['Safe to Assume the Virus is Everywhere', Wisconsin's Chief Medical Officers Says](#)

On September 30, the WI Department of Health Services released [With Surge in Cases, DHS Launches New COVID-19 Data](#) and [Mitigation Strategies to Aid Local Communities](#)

On September 30, Gov. Evers, Lt. Gov. Barnes, DHS, and UW Population Health Institute Announce [Just Recovery Initiative to Address Disproportionate Impact of COVID-19 on Wisconsin's Communities of Color](#)

On September 30, WI Department of Health Services shared [Resources for Assistance in Wisconsin](#)

On September 30, the Wisconsin Public Radio published [42 Percent Of All Native American COVID-19 Cases in State Were Reported in September](#)

On September 30, WI Department of Health Services [DPH Interim Administrator Stephanie Smiley: Masks are an Important Tool](#)

On September 30, WI Department of Health Services [Forward Health: Delay in Printing and Mailing Letters Regarding Additional FoodShare Benefits for September](#)

On October 1, WI Department of Health Services posted [Dr. Ryan Westergaard: Keeping Social Circles Small](#)

On October 1, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel published [‘I wish they could see how bad things are getting’: As Wisconsin’s hospitals fill up with COVID-19 patients, front-line workers sound the alarm](#)

On October 1, Governor Evers, Secretary-designee Palm issued [Emergency Order #2 Order to Aid our Health Care Facilities to Provide Treatment to Wisconsinites Impacted by COVID-19](#)

On October 1, WI Department of Health Services released [Guidance related to viral whole genome sequencing of SARS-CoV-2 for the public health response](#)

On October 1, [Governor Evers Announces COVID-19 Information and Resources Website Receives International Award](#)

On October 2, The Journal Sentinel published [WMC files lawsuit to block state plans to reveal businesses with multiple COVID-19 cases](#)

## **Actions Marathon County is Taking**

Local actions are guided by the [Center for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#), [WI Department of Health Services, WI Emergency Management](#), and the State of WI COVID-19 Emergency Operations Center (SEOC). The following pandemic functions are being carried out.

### Contact Tracing and Surveillance

- Implemented WI Department of Health Services Contact Tracing Crisis Standards given the number of cases has exceeded the health department’s resources. Notification of close contacts is being carried out by schools, businesses, and other entities.
- Participate in a state/local health department community testing advisory group to develop strategies to support Wisconsin’s testing goals of 85,000 COVID-19 tests per week. October testing target for Marathon County is a minimum of 1,300 tests per week. Testing goals include;
  - o Respond to every employer, corrections, and congregate care outbreak,
  - o Test every nursing home resident and staff member,
  - o Establish community testing programs for symptomatic individuals in target communities, and
  - o Ensure everyone who is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms gets a test.

For the time period of September 16-29, the percent positive was 11.9% for a total of 5,714 tests done during this two week time period.

- Further the development of a comprehensive and coordinated testing plan with area health care systems and the Portage Health & Human Services and Wood County Health Department; securing a dedicated testing site with the National Guard in greater Wausau area to provide surge capacity for health care systems
- Follow-up on 49 active facility outbreaks to ensure best practices are in place to control further spread, having 101 facility outbreaks since April 7
- Follow-up 1,692 negative, positive, or contacts to cases reported during the week, for a total of 27,338 from March 1- October 3, 2020. Negative reports have been processed and imported into the WI Electronic Disease Surveillance System (WEDSS) database thru September 24, having 4,315 records to process. WEDSS was scheduled for upgrade October 2-4. The upgrade would process and import negative tests. The upgrade has been delayed until October 16-18.
- Trained 5 new contact tracers, overseeing 30 contracted employees who are carrying out disease investigation and contact tracing activities or support tasks
- Requested assistance from the WI Department of Health Services Contact Tracing Team to help in disease investigation and contact tracing efforts

#### Community Containment and Mitigation

- Isolate residents tested positive for COVID-19 and quarantine close contacts and assure they have a safe place to stay
- Maintain alternative isolate site plans for residents known or suspected to be infected with COVID-19 who cannot isolate safely at home in the Wausau and Marshfield area
- Field 463 calls from businesses or business related questions since March 25, having 8 calls during the week of September 28
- Provide a weekly report to area schools on recommendations for mitigation and control measures and COVID-19 activity in the county; field questions from schools and provide recommendations based on local school conditions
- Promote the Wausau Area Chamber of Commerce [Consumer Safety Pledge](#) initiative. Kept the Wausau Area Chamber of Commerce abreast of surge of cases and impact on contact tracing and notification for area businesses/organizations
- Field questions and [complaints](#), provide education and resources to area businesses/organizations regarding Wisconsin's requirement for face coverings. Received 38 complaints the week of September 27 for a total of 732 since the on-line form was made available on August 13

#### Health Care System Response

- Monitor regional availability of health care resources for the COVID-19 response
- Participate in the NCW-HERC (North Central Wisconsin Health Emergency Readiness Coalition) hospital updates to stay abreast of health care system capacity in regards to testing and caring for patients
- Participate in weekly NCW-HERC (North Central Wisconsin Health Emergency Readiness Coalition) Board of Directors calls to keep abreast of response plans for hospitals, clinics, long-term care facilities, EMS
- Carryout a county-wide system to respond to PPE requests from allocations received from the state

- Hosted a National Guard community testing event on Friday, October 2 at Northcentral Technical College, having 735 individuals tested

### Communication

- Outreach efforts to populations:
  - o Hispanic – Translated new materials: masking, prevention measures, and community testing event. Distributed packet of new materials to the Hispanic Liaison. Provided support to the food distribution site in Western Marathon County. Promoted the community testing event and flu shots via Facebook.
  - o Hmong – Translated new materials: masking, prevention measures, and community testing event. Distributed packet of new materials to the Hmong American Association.
  - o Plain Clothes – Mailed guidance on masks, flu shots, and weekly data summary
- Provide accurate, timely and consistent information via [Marathon County Health Department website](#)
- Inform the community via [Marathon County Health Department Facebook](#)
  - o Posts: 26, Shares: 346, New Followers: 95 for week of September 27
  - o Posts: 748, Shares: 8,070, Followers: 4,961 since March 1
- Issued 3 press releases, conducted 11 interviews, and provided 3 media consults during the week of September 27; for a total of 40 press releases and 198 interviews/contact with the media since March 1
- Field 303 calls from the general public during the week of September 27

### What the Public Can Do

Watch your distance, stay 6 feet from others who don't live in your household. When gathering with other people, limit the number of people. Avoid group gatherings where physical distancing is hard to maintain.

Wear a cloth face covering when indoors or in an enclosed space, other than at a private residence.

Spend more time at home.

Stay home if sick.

Wash your hands frequently. Avoid touching your face. Cover your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing.

Get a flu shot.

Reach out for help if you're feeling overwhelmed. It's OK to ask for help. Call 211 to find a helping professional. Visit [Helping Wisconsin cope during COVID-19](#).

Seek credible sources of information from the [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#) and the [State of WI Department of Health Services](#) to learn more about COVID-19.