

Friday, March 20, 2020

Dear Dr. Moreno and Monterey County Health Department staff:

This is an unprecedented time. We in the Monterey County press corps know that every day is unpredictable and exhausting. It's for precisely that reason that Monterey County residents deserve reliable, trustworthy and up-to-date information about the COVID-19 pandemic.

There is fear and uncertainty, and delivering accurate data consistently helps people understand and make sense of a difficult and confusing time. Information and transparency are essential to prevent panic.

It's our understanding that you intend to provide only weekly updates on the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Monterey County. This is absolutely unacceptable to the public, and to us in the press. Our combined tens of thousands of readers, listeners and viewers rely on us to provide accurate and up-to-date information. Your shelter-in-place order defines journalists as "essential" services in this time. We require your essential data in order to fulfill our essential obligation to the public.

Other agencies are issuing daily reports, such as the Santa Cruz County Health Services Agency, Santa Clara County Public Health Department, and California Department of Public Health. Some smaller, local agencies are also providing daily updates, such as the city of Monterey city manager, who is doing a daily press call. We understand you've made the choice to provide updated data only weekly, rather than daily, due to limited staffing. This is a taxing time for governments, journalists, health professionals and the public. But the public demands and deserves timely and accurate information daily, regardless of staffing stresses.

Sincerely,

Dave Kellogg, Managing Editor, Monterey Herald

Joe Livernois, Editor, Voices of Monterey Bay

Silas Lyons, Executive Editor, The Salinas Californian

Sara Rubin, Editor, Monterey County Weekly

Lourdes Sandoval, News Director, Univision 67 Costa Central

Kristy Santiago, General Manager, KION TV and Telemundo 23