November 13, 2020

First in the Nation

City of Kirkland, Washington

COVID-19 Initial Response After Action Report

BERK

Handling Instructions

The title of this document is *First in the Nation: City of Kirkland, Washington COVID-19 Initial Response After Action Report (AAR)*.

The information in this AAR is unclassified.

For more information, please contact:

Heather Kelly, CEM
Emergency Manager, City of Kirkland
425-587-3670 (desk)
425-213-2317 (cell)
hkelly@kirklandwa.gov
EOC@kirklandwa.gov

BERK

STRATEGY ▪ ANALYSIS ▪ COMMUNICATIONS

"Helping Communities and Organizations Create Their Best"

Founded in 1988, we are an interdisciplinary strategy and analysis firm providing integrated, creative and analytically rigorous approaches to complex policy and planning decisions. Our team of strategic planners, policy and financial analysts, economists, cartographers, information designers and facilitators work together to bring new ideas, clarity, and robust frameworks to the development of analytically-based and action-oriented plans.

Brian Murphy · Project Manager
Chloe Kinsey · Planning Support

EHA
ERIC HOLDEMAN & ASSOCIATES

Eric Holdeman · AAR Lead
Diane Newman · Planner

Executive Summary

CONTEXT AND PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

The world watched in late 2019 as the first reported cases of COVID-19, a disease caused by a new coronavirus, were found in China. Epidemiologists noted that the disease appeared to be highly transmissible, and early on the death rate from the disease was unknown. While there were concerns about when and where the virus would appear in the United States, no one could have expected that it would be first detected in Washington state.

In late February 2020, first responders and health officials detected what appeared to be an outbreak of flu-like symptoms in a number of patients living in a long-term care facility in Kirkland, Washington. Fire department personnel responded and took patients to a local hospital, where one of the patients died and testing revealed that several of those patients were positive for COVID-19.

No city, large or small, could have been prepared for what followed, especially when operating in an environment of extreme ambiguity and lacking certainty about almost every aspect of what they would be dealing with. Kirkland was literally operating in "the fog of the virus."

This report focuses on organizational impacts of the pandemic on City of Kirkland ("City") departments and the City's ability to maintain general government operations and service provision. It is *not* focused on field operations or specific department procedures, but it does address policies and actions taken by City leaders. This report also does not address actions of other governmental or non-governmental organizations. The purpose of this report is to help improve the City's response to future pandemics and other disasters. It describes what worked and what could be improved. As of the date of this plan, the City is continuing to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. **The time period addressed in this plan is roughly from February 29 through May 31, 2020.**

The consulting team used the following inputs to generate the After Action Report (AAR) and the accompanying Improvement Plan (IP):

- **Document review,** including emergency management plans, emails sent by the City Manager, minutes of City Council meetings, Emergency Operations Center (EOC) documents, and other written documents regarding the City's initial pandemic response.

- **In-depth interviews with 20 City leaders, department directors, and managers, as well as five liaisons and partners[1] from other organizations that maintained close contact with the EOC.**

- **An online survey distributed to approximately 640 full-time, permanent City employees via email in early September 2020.** This allowed City staff an opportunity to give feedback on their experiences during the initial pandemic period.

INCIDENT OVERVIEW

One early decision made a significant difference in the ability of the City of Kirkland to respond to events as they unfolded—the immediate activation of their Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and a

---

[1] One of the five community partners was affected by the home evacuation orders due to local brushfires in early September 2020 and thus provided written responses to the questions rather than participating in a Zoom interview.

proclamation of emergency by the City Manager, which was shortly thereafter ratified by the City Council. These timely moves enabled a coordinated response to the situation as it unfolded.

City leadership explicitly determined that the City's response to the virus should avoid engaging in political partisanship and instead be based on science and recommendations by subject matter experts, including medical advice as it was known and evolved. This informed the City's use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), social distancing, and remote work, and contributed to the lack of spread among City staff.

City leadership established two primary priorities that drove policies, directives, and decisions:

COVID-19 City Priorities

✓ *Support the ongoing good health of community members and City employees.*

✓ *Continue delivery of City services.*

City leadership communicated those priorities to City employees and applied financial resources where necessary to provide supplies and equipment as available.

Initially, it was a first responder-focused incident, with fire and police personnel responding to ill patients and deaths. Those who responded early with only standard personal protective equipment (PPE) and were exposed to infected patients needed to be isolated or quarantined. Soon, those responding to patients with COVID-19 symptoms were required to wear enhanced PPE, and other precautions for infectious disease containment were implemented. These early actions helped protect the rest of the City's first responders.

What followed next has been experienced many times over by other state and local governments as the virus spread across the country. What was different for the City is that they were forced to be the first to respond to the virus in the United States. They had to react with little foreknowledge and without any of the information transfer that occurred among other governments as they became impacted by the virus.

The City reacted quickly to each new aspect of the disease and its impacts as they were detected. Again, a high-functioning EOC assisted in rapid decision making and the implementation of those decisions.

OBSERVATIONS

The City of Kirkland faced immense challenges when Kirkland became the first community in the United States where multiple cases of the coronavirus were discovered and reported and where associated deaths occurred. This happened early in our collective knowledge of the virus, including how it might be transmitted and what the lethality of the disease might be.

While we do identify challenges and specific opportunities for improvement, we find that the City was remarkably successful in achieving its two stated priorities of supporting the ongoing good health of community members and City employees while continuing the delivery of City services. Very few employees were infected with the virus; the disease was contained within the workforce; no employees were laid off; and residents and businesses were able to rely on the ongoing provision of core City functions.

We find that three key factors enabled the City to be successful:

1. The City is a high-functioning organization that operated effectively and efficiently before the pandemic. This included healthy City Council relationships and a strong City Manager. Together, they functioned well as a team in their response to the pandemic. Council Members understood their policy role and did not attempt to insert themselves into operational matters. Meanwhile, the City Manager made every attempt to keep Council Members appraised of the situation as it unfolded and sought their prompt approval and ratification of actions undertaken in response to emergency circumstances, such as when expedited legislative approvals were needed. Additionally, the City was fortunate to be in a strong financial position, including healthy budget reserves that had been thoughtfully set aside for a number of years going into the pandemic response.

2. The City's leadership had committed, in advance, time and resources to disaster planning, trainings, and disaster exercises, which informed City staff of their responsibilities in this emergency situation.

3. The City activated its EOC immediately, which centralized information sharing, coordination, and decision making, leading to a more coherent and effective response by the City as a whole.

The pandemic forced the City to adapt its standard operations, resulting in innovations and learnings that will serve the City well in the future. Examples include:

▪ **A movement toward e-government** as many staff members were able to work from home and IT tools were deployed to assist them in performing their duties remotely.

▪ **The development of a completely new "pandemic leave" policy** to enable City staff to have additional time off due to pandemic impacts on their personal lives, including with respect to closed schools for children.

▪ **Furthering good communication between management and employees.** The ability to listen to employee concerns and develop flexible and creative solutions, all of which will continue to be important throughout this pandemic and beyond.

▪ **A deepened awareness of the need to refine the formal labor contract negotiation process** to address how labor negotiations and interactions are accomplished during a proclaimed disaster.

One key aspect that dominated our interviews with City staff was the need to communicate regularly with the 640+ full-time members of the City team. Each department director approached this task in different ways. Some augmented Citywide announcements with their own messaging and, in some cases, by making themselves personally available to employees. This personal contact was especially appreciated by employees early in the outbreak, when information on the virus was especially limited.

One highlight concerning internal communications that was mentioned by City employees repeatedly relates to the detailed emails sent from the City Manager to all City staff to keep them apprised of the City's response and the changing City directives. This time-consuming task, often accomplished late into the night, provided a continuity of thinking that reflected a sense of care for the employees while encouraging them to continue to serve the community.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN

While the City of Kirkland was successful in supporting the ongoing good health of community members and City employees while continuing the delivery of City services, it is natural that a review of the

incident surfaces opportunities for improvement. The City has actively sought this review and feedback. The following recommendations are summarized in more detail in the full report and accompanying Improvement Plan (IP) which provides specific implementing suggestions. We recommend that City Manager appoint and authorize an individual to coordinate efforts to plan for, implement, and report on progress for each recommendation identified in the IP.

- **Decision Making During Disasters.** Decision makers need to recognize the progression of the emergency and be prepared to deliberately and transparently modify decision making processes if necessary. Tabletop exercises with leadership, where issues move from crisis to discussion-based decision making, will provide a safe environment where these transitions can be practiced.

- **Calibrating the Return to Normal Operations.** It is important to communicate the ongoing nature of the incident and its continuing impact on the City even well after the heart of the crisis has passed. Leadership staff, as well as City Council Members, can amplify these messages and help set appropriate expectations with staff, board and commission members, the public, and other stakeholders.

- **Documentation.** Establish procedures to move new or updated directives into a centralized location accessible to employees.

- **Internal Communications.** Develop Citywide protocols for transmitting policy decisions and vital information throughout all departments.

- **Remote Work.** Explore options to set a standard evaluative process for determining when and how employees should be given the option to work remotely. Explore technology solutions that allow employees to seamlessly use City phone numbers when working remotely, such as VOIP integrations for Skype or Microsoft Teams, or purchasing City-owned cell phones. Establish policies that allow employees to move some hardware from City facilities to home offices during long-term emergencies that require remote work.

- **Public Information.** Identify individuals who can supplement tasks performed by the Communications Manager in the City Manager's Office. Train and exercise them in all aspects including creation of media packets, working with media during interviews, and practicing the best way to deliver messages, including news conferences at key intervals to efficiently meet media (and in this way, community) interests.

- **Risk Management.** Evaluate the City's approach to risk management and identify clearly who is responsible for this function.

- **Labor Relations.** Develop protocols between labor unions and City management that will be used during times of disaster.

- **Employee Wellness.** Develop policies that encourage all employees to take a certain amount of time off work over a defined period of time, even during emergencies or disasters. Review key positions identified in the Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) to determine which may benefit from cross-training additional employees to perform key tasks. Train and provide an opportunity for those employees to perform in those key functions during exercises.

- **Planning.** Update COOP and review essential functions Citywide, considering limited service or resources over an extended time frame

CONCLUSIONS AND A LOOK TO THE FUTURE

The task ahead is for the City of Kirkland to maintain its level of readiness as the virus evolves and the hoped-for vaccine eventually becomes available. While many references have been made to a "once in a hundred years pandemic," the short- and long-term forecast for future pandemics indicates that the possibility of future disease outbreaks has become much more likely due to more animal-human contacts and international travel. This AAR should not be seen as an academic study, but rather as a tool to reinforce the many strengths and to address the short list of opportunities for improvement identified in this report.

Given the many successes achieved by policy makers and staff during their initial encounter with COVID-19 and their dedication to addressing identified challenges and opportunities to improve, it is obvious that the community of Kirkland is in good hands.

Contents

Context

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

Incorporated in 1905, Kirkland is the sixth largest city in King County, Washington and is a suburb of Seattle. The City has a total area of 17.83 square miles and a population of 93,010, according to a 2019 Census estimate.[2] Community demographics can be found at the U.S. Census website. See Exhibit 1 for a map of Kirkland and surrounding areas.

The City of Kirkland has a council-manager form of government with a City Manager hired by the City Council. There are close to 700 employees working for the City of Kirkland, most of whom are full-time.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This After Action Report (AAR) addresses the initial response by the City of Kirkland ("City") to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic for a three month period **from February 29, 2020 through May 31, 2020.** This time window aligns with the opening of the City's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) following the discovery that the virus was active in the community to the closure of the EOC.

Exhibit 1. Map of Kirkland and Surrounding Areas
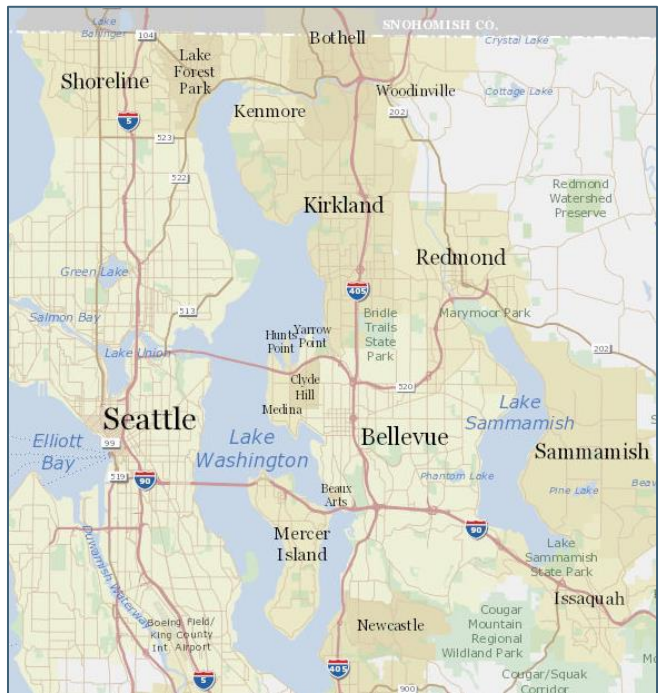
Source: King County iMap, 2020.

This report focuses on organizational impacts of the pandemic on departments and the City's ability to maintain general government operations and service provision. It is *not* focused on field operations or specific department procedures but does address policies and actions taken by City leaders. This report does not address actions of other governmental or non-governmental organizations.

The City has actively sought this review and feedback. The purpose of this report is to improve the City's response to future pandemics and other disasters. It describes both what worked well and what could be improved.

---

[2] U.S. Census Bureau. 2019. "QuickFacts: Kirkland city, Washington."

REPORT PREPARATION AND ORGANIZATION

The City of Kirkland hired BERK Consulting, Inc., who subcontracted with Eric Holdeman and Associates (EHA), to develop an AAR that reviews the City's initial overall response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Included in the report is a timeline that not only includes decisions made by the City but also some orders and decisions made by county, state, and federal officials. An Improvement Plan (IP) describes specific issues and recommendations and identifies the organization to lead the efforts and timeframes to address recommendations.

The consulting team used the following inputs to generate the AAR and accompanying IP:

▪ **Document review,** including emergency management plans, emails sent by the City Manager, minutes of City Council meetings, Emergency Operations Center (EOC) documents, and other written documents regarding the incident.

▪ **In-depth interviews with 20 City of Kirkland leaders, department directors, and managers, as well as five liaisons and partners[3] from other organizations that maintained close contact with the EOC.** All interviews were conducted via the Zoom online video conferencing platform and took approximately 45-60 minutes. Each interviewee was provided with the questions prior to the interview, though some interviews deviated from the list of prepared questions. At least two consulting team members were present during each interview to facilitate detailed notetaking.

Interviewees were asked to focus on the study period (February 29-May 31) in formulating their responses and were informed that comments would not be attributed to specific employees in the final report. The interview protocol and a list of interviewees by title is included in **Appendix 2: Interviews.**

▪ **An online survey distributed to approximately 640 full-time, permanent City employees via email in early September 2020.** This allowed City staff an opportunity to give feedback on their experiences during the initial pandemic period. The 11-question online survey (hosted on the SurveyMonkey platform) asked respondents to focus on the study period (February 29-May 31) in formulating their input. Survey questions are included in **Appendix 3: Employee Survey.**

This input informs the following sections of this report:

▪ **Observations** describes successes and challenges in planning, policy direction, employee health and wellbeing, operational communication and coordination, continuation of City services, and public information.

▪ **Recommendations** summarizes significant findings by theme, including decision making during disasters, documentation, remote work, communications, public information, risk management, labor relations, and employee wellness.

▪ **The Improvement Plan** identifies actions that can be taken to help shape Kirkland's

---

[3] One of the five community partners was affected by the home evacuation orders due to local brushfires in early September 2020 and thus provided written responses to the questions rather than participating in a Zoom interview.

preparedness priorities and support continuous improvement. It builds on themes described in the Recommendations section and includes some additional items that did not rise to the thematic level.

- **Conclusions** provides a summary review of the incident and considerations as the City continues to respond to the virus and prepare for similar future challenges.

INCIDENT OVERVIEW

In late 2019, a novel coronavirus was discovered in Wuhan, China. It was soon found that the virus was not only present elsewhere in China, but also throughout other countries. The virus was named SARS-CoV-2, and the disease it causes was named COVID-19. The virus was first discovered in the United States in January 2020. One of the first US patients lived in Snohomish County, Washington State, so not only were national disease tracking agencies aware of its arrival, but Washington State Department of Health (DOH) and local health agencies began planning for it early in the year. DOH and Public Health – Seattle & King County (PHSKC) entered into immediate discussions and offered guidance to local jurisdictions beginning shortly after the first case in this country was diagnosed in January.

Before the first case of COVID-19 was discovered in their community, City leadership were taking steps to prepare for its arrival. A draft pandemic annex to the City's Continuity of Operations/Government Plan (COOP/COG)[4] was developed in February 2020 to provide guidance on how to deliver City services while supporting employee and community health.

In late February, Kirkland Fire Department (KFD) noticed an increase in the number of aid responses for patients with flu-like symptoms living in a long-term care facility in the community of Kirkland and shared that information with PHSKC. In the late evening of Friday, February 28, EvergreenHealth Medical Center notified KFD and Kirkland Emergency Management that a patient who had tested positive for COVID-19 had died in their facility.

The City proclaimed an emergency, as did Washington State and King County. Within a few weeks, government officials took actions to protect communities, such as limiting attendance at public gatherings and closing non-essential businesses. Bars and in-restaurant dining were also closed, with some restaurants modifying their business plans to include take-out service only, allowing them to remain open. Schools closed statewide, businesses established remote work options for those employees who could work outside their offices, and the Governor issued a "Stay Home, Stay Safe" order.

Many people, particularly those in the service industry, were laid off. A statewide moratorium on residential evictions for rent nonpayment was issued. By early April, face coverings and six-foot social distance measures were recommended for anyone in public areas.

---

[4] Per the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), a COOP is a "plan that provides for the continuity of essential functions of an organization in the event [of] an emergency." A COG plan is a plan that allows for "the preservation, maintenance, or reconstitution of civil government's ability to carry out the executive, legislative and judicial processes under the threat or occurrence of any emergency condition." (Blanchard, B. Wayne. 2008. *Guide to Emergency Management and Related Terms, Definitions, Concepts, Acronyms, Organizations, Programs, Guidance, Executive Orders & Legislation*. Federal Emergency Management Agency.)

Exhibit 2 presents a timeline of major decisions and actions made by City officials, as well as directives from other authorities that impacted City actions.

Exhibit 2. Timeline of Incident Decisions, Actions, and Directives

Date	Decision, Action, or Directive
Late February	Kirkland Fire Department (KFD) identifies a high number of aid calls to a local long-term care facility
2/28/2020	First known US death due to COVID-19 occurs at a Kirkland hospital
2/29/2020	Kirkland Emergency Operations Center (EOC) activated
2/29/2020	Kirkland City Manager signs Emergency Proclamation
2/29/2020	Governor signs statewide Emergency Proclamation
2/29/2020	City places 25 firefighters and 2 police officers under quarantine, some of them at Fire Station 21, which goes out of service
2/29/2020	Public Health – Seattle & King County (PHSKC) and Centers for Disease Control (CDC) confirm 3 COVID-19 cases and 1 death associated with a long-term care facility in Kirkland
3/1/2020	King County signs Emergency Proclamation
3/2/2020	City gives staff training on precautionary social distancing
3/2/2020	Major local employers, including Amazon and Microsoft, begin encouraging employees to work from home
3/3/2020	City Council ratifies Emergency Proclamation
3/5/2020	City allows remote work on a case-by-case basis; cancels all in-person meetings except City Council meetings; decides to keep City facilities open
3/6/2020	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) sends strike team to long-term care facility
3/6/2020	City cancels recreation programming and classes; closes community centers to the public
3/11/2020	State and King County limit gatherings to 250 people or less
3/11/2020	City Municipal Court cancels all jury trials through the end of March; begins conducting probation hearings by phone
3/12/2020	Lake Washington School District (LWSD) closes schools for at least two weeks
3/13/2020	City Council moves meetings online; City closes all athletic fields and picnic

Date	Decision, Action, or Directive
	pavilions at City parks
3/13/2020	State orders all schools to close for in-person instruction through the end of April
3/13/2020	President signs nationwide Major Disaster Declaration
3/14/2020	City puts Fire Station 21 back into service after deep cleaning
3/16/2020	City Hall closes to the public – services available online or by phone with self-serve kiosks or drop boxes available; City extends cancellation of recreational programming through April 24
3/17/2020	State shuts down bars, restaurants for in-person service, and bans large gatherings – other state mandates follow within days
3/17/2020	City Council (first online meeting) briefed on COVID-19 actions by City Manager and Deputy City Manager
3/18/2020	State issues moratorium on residential evictions for rent non-payment and lapse of lease
3/18/2020	City suspends parking enforcement for time limitations and parking fees for City-owned lots
3/20/2020	Kirkland Police Department (KPD) announces increased use of online reporting, limited contact for not-in-progress crimes
3/21/2020	City and Lake Washington School District close all playgrounds and sport courts
3/23/2020	State signs "Stay Home, Stay Healthy" order; most City employees deemed critical infrastructure workers under this order
3/31/2020	City issues a moratorium on evictions for small businesses and nonprofits; authorizes deferral of utility payments and suspension of late fees
4/2/2020	State extends "Stay Home, Stay Healthy" order through May 4
4/5/2020	State DOH recommends face coverings for everyone
4/6/2020	School closures extended statewide for rest of the school year
4/9/2020	City Parks & Community Services Department cancels all programs through May 25
5/1/2020	State "Stay Home, Stay Healthy" order extended through May 31; announces Safe State Washington (4-phase re-opening approach)

Date	Decision, Action, or Directive
5/5/2020	City reopens the Kirkland Marina and boat launch
5/15/2020	KFD announces plan to restart fire inspections in multifamily buildings
5/19/2020	PHSKC's mandate requiring wearing of face coverings in indoor spaces goes into effect
5/31/2020	Kirkland EOC Closed

Sources: City of Kirkland, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Within hours of discovering that COVID-19 was active in the Kirkland community, and in fact that a death had occurred, the Kirkland EOC[5] opened at 2:00 AM on Saturday, February 29 to support the City's response to COVID-19. The Kirkland EOC closed May 31—however, the Emergency Proclamation remained active and Emergency Management staff as well as all City employees continue to coordinate and support this long-term response and recovery effort.

City leadership explicitly determined that the City's response to the virus should avoid engaging in political partisanship and instead be based on science and recommendations by subject matter experts, including medical advice as it was known and evolved. This informed the City's use of PPE, social distancing, and remote work and contributed to the lack of spread among City staff.

City leadership established two primary priorities that drove policies, directives, and decisions:

COVID-19 City Priorities

✓ *Support the ongoing good health of community members and City employees.*

✓ *Continue delivery of City services.*

City leadership communicated those priorities to City employees and applied financial resources where necessary to provide supplies and equipment as available.

When COVID-19 first entered the Kirkland community, very little was known about the virus. Fire and police personnel were apprehensive about responding to calls where the virus might be present. Many police officers were not used to wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) and decontamination was necessary after certain calls. Over 30 police and fire personnel were quarantined or isolated at times during the first three weeks of the incident. Two City facilities were used for those who could not isolate or quarantine effectively at home. Using a hazardous materials (HAZMAT)[6] approach, fire stations were divided into hot, warm, and cold zones for personal safety, and decontamination areas were established. Boots were not allowed inside stations, so alternate footwear was purchased for wear inside.

---

[5] In emergency management, an EOC is the jurisdiction's central, physical location for coordinating the response to an incident or event.
[6] HAZMAT procedures are used to reduce the risk of exposure to any substance that could threaten the health of those who are exposed—while often employed to reduce exposure risk when handling explosive, flammable, corrosive, or radioactive materials; these procedures were applied by KFD to reduce the risk of virus exposure.

The City Manager sent regular updates to City employees via organization-wide emails, keeping them updated on policy decisions and directives, as well as preparedness measures and actions they could take to promote the safety of themselves and their families. Example emails are included in **Appendix 5: Sample City Manager Global Messages.** The City Manager led a policy group that included department directors and other select staff that initially met daily and continued to meet through the month of May at regular intervals. The City Council was kept informed of activities by the City Manager, and the Council provided political and policy support to City staff, including assisting in obtaining federal support for long-term care facilities which were severely impacted by the virus.

Decisions made by the City beyond state or county mandates included:

- Moving many services to online access and providing kiosks at City Hall for access to services.

- Suspending time limitations and charges for vehicle parking on public streets and in City-owned lots, with some limited exceptions such as parking in disabled spots, in front of fire hydrants, and in spots blocking driveways.

- Allowing businesses to block off sections directly in front of their business for curbside services.

- Imposing a moratorium on evictions for small businesses (less than 50 employees) and nonprofits for rent nonpayment or lapse of lease.

- Allocating $265,000 of reserve funds to establish a human services stabilization fund.

NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS GOAL AND CORE CAPABILITIES

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) defines the National Preparedness Goal as:

> *A secure and resilient nation with the capabilities required across the whole community to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from the threats and hazards that pose the greatest risk.*

Risks considered include disease pandemics as well as natural and human caused disasters.

The National Preparedness Goal describes five mission areas: **prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery;** and 32 activities, called Core Capabilities, that address the greatest risks to the nation.

Many government emergency management programs including Washington State and the City support the National Preparedness Goal and the accompanying Core Capabilities. For this report, we are highlighting five Core Capabilities and have linked them to actions taken by the City (Exhibit 3).

Exhibit 3. FEMA Core Capabilities

Core Capability	FEMA Definition
Planning	Conduct a systematic process engaging the whole community as appropriate in the development of executable strategic, operational, and/or tactical-level approaches to meet defined objectives.
Public Information and Warning	Deliver coordinated, prompt, reliable, and actionable information to the whole community through the use of clear, consistent, accessible, and culturally and linguistically appropriate methods to effectively relay information regarding any threat or hazard, as well as the actions being taken and the assistance being made available, as appropriate.
Operational Coordination	Establish and maintain a unified and coordinated operational structure and process that appropriately integrates all critical stakeholders and supports the execution of core capabilities.
Situational Awareness	Provide all decision makers with decision-relevant information regarding the nature and extent of the hazard, any cascading effects, and the status of the response.
Environmental Response / Health and Safety	Conduct appropriate measures to ensure the protection of the health and safety of the public and workers, as well as the environment, from all-hazards in support of responder operations and the affected communities.

Sources: FEMA, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Observations

SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS

This section summarizes what we observed regarding planning, policy direction, employee health and wellbeing, operational communication and coordination, continuation of City services, and public information.

The City faced immense challenges by becoming the first community in the United States where multiple cases of the coronavirus were discovered and where associated deaths occurred. This happened early in our national collective knowledge of the virus, including early and ongoing uncertainties regarding how it might be transmitted and what the lethality of the disease might be.

While we do identify challenges and specific opportunities for improvement, we find that the City was remarkably successful in achieving its two stated priorities of supporting the ongoing good health of community members and City employees while continuing the delivery of City services. Very few employees were infected with the virus; the disease was contained within the workforce; no employees were laid off; and residents and businesses were able to rely on the ongoing provision of core City functions.

We find that three key factors enabled the City to be successful:

1. The City is a high-functioning organization that operated effectively and efficiently before the pandemic. This included healthy City Council relationships and a strong City Manager. Together they functioned well as a team in their response to the pandemic. Additionally, the City was in a strong financial position going into the crisis due to cautious long-term budget planning.

2. The City's leadership had committed, in advance, time and resources to disaster planning, trainings, and disaster exercises which informed City staff of their responsibilities in this emergency situation.

3. The City activated its EOC immediately, which centralized information sharing, coordination, and decision making, leading to a more coherent and effective response by the City as a whole.

PLANNING

Activities such as developing disaster plans, conducting training and exercises, and engaging in contingency planning before and during COVID-19 prepared Kirkland leadership and employees for this ongoing disaster.

Planning and preparedness work.

-Kurt Triplett, City Manager

Pre-Disaster Planning and Exercises

The City of Kirkland emergency management program is housed within the Kirkland Fire Department and includes two full-time positions. The program has been in place for several years

with City departments and elected officials actively participating in planning efforts to include the COOP/COG and a Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP). A draft of a Pandemic Annex to the COOP/COG was proactively developed in February 2020, prior to COVID-19 arriving in the Kirkland community.

Disaster preparedness training and exercises were conducted over the past few years using a variety of scenarios. Exercises provide practice for department directors and policy makers as well as the EOC staff who will work together during an actual incident. Organizational structure, EOC procedures, equipment and layout of the facility, and position responsibilities are all tested during disaster exercises. By working on the same scenarios, policy makers also have an opportunity to consider policy options during simulated disasters. Those interviewed who participated in exercises and later worked in the EOC commented on the value of the exercises.

In September 2019, all members of the City Council along with the City Manager and Emergency Manager participated in a Disaster Crisis Communications training session. It was well received and mentioned as one reason that Council Members understood their role during this disaster. In January 2020, three new Council Members attended an Emergency Management orientation session to further their understanding of their role during a disaster.

POLICY DIRECTION

As noted in Exhibit 3, Situational Awareness is identified as a Core Capability and is important in all areas of disaster preparedness, response, and recovery.[7] Decision makers develop situational awareness by relying on information observed personally and provided by trusted sources such as scientists, health experts, employees, and the community. Subject matter experts provide data that helps with those decisions.

City Manager and City Council

The City Manager reacted early, provided strong leadership, and set the example for the City's response to COVID-19. Before the first patient was confirmed in the community, he began talking with key City staff regarding anticipated actions when the virus arrived. When he was notified that a patient at Evergreen Health Medical Center had tested positive and died, he notified department directors via an emergency conference call. From that point on, he displayed confidence, conversed at least daily with department directors, and communicated regularly with the Council and employees, setting a positive and encouraging tone throughout.

The current seven-member City Council includes some who have worked together for several years as well as some newer members who began their term as recently as January 2020. With the arrival of COVID-19, Council Members demonstrated their ability to work together with City staff leadership to help make things happen either through political channels or by approving funding.

The City Council transitioned from in-person council meetings to meeting through video meeting

---

[7] In emergency management, situational awareness includes identifying and communicating key context and organizational focus and needs during an incident so all stakeholders operate from a current fact base and with aligned priorities.

platforms. Each council meeting included a briefing from the City Manager and key City staff regarding COVID-19 activities. All meeting minutes and video recordings are available on the City website. The City Manager also made himself available when individual Council Members had questions or concerns.

City Council Members understood their role during this emergency, and by focusing on policy discussions, allowed City personnel to focus on response issues. Council Members did not insert themselves into operational matters.

Decision Making During Disasters

In normal times, the City of Kirkland culture is such that decisions are discussed in advance with stakeholders or key personnel, with advantages and disadvantages carefully considered over a period of time. Rapid decision making is required during times of an emergency, however, and decision making was necessarily swift and decisive, particularly at the onset of the pandemic.

As an immediate crisis passes, there is generally a little more time to discuss major decisions. Comments in interviews indicated that at times, some decisions could have been made more slowly and would have benefited from additional discussion with stakeholders. The decisions made in these circumstances were not wrong; however, when time is not a significant constraint, input from additional sources tends to lead to more informed decisions.

Moreover, as the City moves through the various stages of an emergency, it is important that its mode of decision making, whether inclusive or expedited, be made explicit and transparent to all involved.

This topic is further addressed in the Recommendations section.

A Desire to Return to Normal

Another important point of calibration relates to the "return to normalcy." Incidents, particularly those stemming from a pandemic or other public health concerns, can have a very long tail, with long-lasting impacts on a community's ability to return to normal. An effective response, with government services provided through effective implementation of continuity of operations plans, can in fact mask this impact. It is natural to have a desire to return government operations to the previous steady state. This is especially true for staff and senior policy makers not directly involved in the actual response activities, members of the City's many board and commissions, and of course the public. While it may appear to these parties that the incident has passed and that the City has largely returned to business as usual, in fact it has only established stability, with state or health orders and other factors, not to mention what may be a continuing emergent situation, continuing to affect operations. Ideas to counter the eagerness for a return to normalcy are addressed in the Recommendations section.

Resources

The City of Kirkland was financially healthy at the beginning of the pandemic as a result of cautious budget decisions made over a number of years. During this crisis period the City Manager made a concerted effort to concentrate the full resources of the City on the response to COVID-19. Mission essential services identified in the COOP, such as building permits, were

continued, but other normal functions of government, such as advisory board meetings, were appropriately postponed.

The Mayor, City Manager, and the Emergency Manager also worked with state and county officials to bring in federal aid from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to support the Kirkland long-term care facility, taking some of the stress off of local resources. Federal health aid arrived within the first week of March.

The City's baseline financial strength, its financial policies during the incident, and outside resources allowed the City Manager, in coordination with the City Council, to authorize the expenditure of funds to support departments in acquiring the PPE and other supplies necessary to protect the health and welfare of the City's first responders and general City line workers. Other investments included:

- The allocation of funds to develop a flyer with safety messages in multiple languages that was sent to every Kirkland residence.

- Information technology (IT) measures identified in strategic planning efforts before the arrival of COVID-19 were put on a fast track and implemented in a matter of weeks.

Municipal Court

The Kirkland Municipal Court Presiding Judge was appointed by the City Manager and confirmed by the City Council in December 2019. He is the only appointed judge for the Court, which includes a staff of about 15 employees. The Judge was notified early of the arrival of COVID-19 into the community and joined City department directors for their meetings and conference calls. This allowed for close policy level coordination between the City Manager and the Court. The Court followed guidance from the Washington State Supreme Court, with some functions being handled remotely through online systems, video conferencing, or in a hybrid model with some individuals in the courtroom and others joining via video conference. Jury trials were halted in March.

Interviewees noted that the use of the video conferencing tool Zoom was found to be very effective in the efficient use of resources. It is expected that many of the adaptations used during the COVID-19 response will be continued into the future, even after the pandemic is over.

Risk Management

Currently the risk management function is performed within the City's Human Resources (HR) department. The function of risk management is basically a collateral duty for the HR Director or their designee. This includes the purchase of insurance to limit City liability. Importantly, the City participates in the Washington Cities Insurance Authority (WCIA) insurance pool and routinely benefits from WCIA resources, which can be of particular value during disasters. WCIA provides insurance coverage, protection, and expert interpretation and direction through professional staff and attorneys.

The response to the pandemic highlighted the many unknowns that needed to be addressed when faced with incomplete information and in an environment of extreme ambiguity with little to no precedence to be followed. It appears that the City Manager, City Attorney, and Emergency Manager collectively addressed risk issues as they arose during the response, drawing on

resources and expertise from WCIA. Related challenges and suggestions are addressed in the Recommendations section.

EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND WELLBEING

One of the primary objectives of the City of Kirkland is to support the health and safety of the community and employees.

Quarantine and Isolation

During the initial days of the COVID-19 response, over 30 Fire Department personnel who responded to any call where a patient had symptoms of COVID-19 were isolated or quarantined either at home or at one of two City facilities. Four police officers who came into contact with COVID-19 patients were also quarantined. As time passed, other City personnel required quarantine or isolation quarters also. The City quickly identified two City-owned facilities where responders who had been in contact with the virus could isolate or quarantine. Protocols and safety measures such as sanitation and decontamination were quickly established. Those who could not quarantine or isolate at home were able to use these facilities.

QUARANTINE VS. ISOLATION

- **Quarantine:** Separating people and limiting movement of people who have or may have been exposed to the disease to see if they become ill.

- **Isolation:** Separating people who are ill from others who are not ill to keep the disease from spreading.

Source: Mayo Clinic, 2020.

Expanded Benefits

In mid-March, the City Manager notified all staff of four new sick leave policies that will be in place for the duration of the Kirkland Emergency Proclamation. These policies were negotiated with labor unions.

1. *Pandemic Leave* – Every City employee was granted up to one full week of pandemic leave. Pandemic leave was available not only for COVID-19 use but also for any reason provided by the normal sick leave benefit to include illness or injury to the employee or a family member. It could also be used if a child's school or daycare was closed due to health reasons.

2. *Shared Sick Leave Bank* – A new shared sick leave bank was created and City employees could donate sick leave hours to the bank. Employees who had exhausted all sick leave and vacation leave balances, as well as all pandemic leave balances, could use an additional week of shared sick leave. The initial one-week limit was established to facilitate distribution of donated leave to all employees who needed it. Additional shared sick leave could be authorized in special circumstances with the approval of HR.

3. *Advanced Sick Leave* – Advanced sick leave is available for those who have exhausted all leave balances, including vacation, sick leave, pandemic leave, and shared leave. The City will allow employees to use additional sick leave by advancing leave accrual to the employee. Advanced leave will be "paid back" as future sick leave balances are earned. For example, an employee may request 40 hours of advanced leave. If that employee accrues

sick leave at eight hours per month, the next five months of accrued leave will "pay back" the advanced leave.

4. ***Administrative Leave*** – Public safety employees who were exposed to COVID-19 were automatically granted 15 days of administrative leave, so there was no need to provide pandemic leave.

Vacation leave accrual caps were suspended for a period of time, and health incentive requirements were adjusted.

Safety at City Facilities

Efforts were taken to promote employee and community safety at City facilities:

- Contracted janitorial service was instructed to increase and adapt cleaning protocols.

- Six-foot distances were marked to encourage social distancing.

- Facilities workers created and manufactured customized plastic barriers in customer service areas.

- As CDC guidelines changed to recommend face masks for all, face coverings were encouraged and later required for staff as well as visitors to City-owned facilities.

- Voluntary safety checkpoints were established for staff where thermometers and additional cleaning supplies were available for staff to perform self-checks.

- Fire stations established hot, warm, and cold zones as well as decontamination areas and procedures in their stations. A "no boots" rule was enforced indoors with alternate footwear provided to employees for use inside.

- Extra efforts were taken between shifts to clean City vehicles and shared equipment, such as police cars and office equipment.

- Those who worked in offices observed social distancing guidelines and safety procedures including hand washing and cleaning work areas often.

Period of Uncertainty

Navigating the twists and turns of science and opinions during this pandemic has been challenging for everyone. There have been new viruses in the past few years but none that impacted so much of the world's population in so short a time frame with an unknown end date. In this world of technology, social media, and multiple information sources, there were many different studies and opinions that provided conflicting information. Some information in the public realm has been more partisan in nature and sometimes not science-based, creating additional potential for confusion.

Initial guidance regarding the general public wearing masks was a moving target. At first, guidance from the CDC and other trusted sources indicated that wearing masks would not protect people from getting the virus, though they might help reduce spreading the virus by those who were ill. By April, that medical guidance had changed and mask wearing became more prevalent. By May, masks were required in public places throughout Washington State to help

limit the transmission of the disease.

During the first week of March it became apparent that many community members were very concerned about long-term impacts on their daily living. Daily living supplies like toilet paper, paper towels, and cleaning products became hard to find and people converged on warehouse and grocery stores like they would in preparation for a hurricane. People stocked up on groceries and some items became difficult to find.

City officials had no concrete answers for their employees or the community during this period of uncertainty. Answers to the following questions changed during the first few weeks and some answers to both scientific and policy-based questions are still pending. How is the virus spread? If I get it will I die? Are children naturally immune? Why does it affect some people so severely but others in the same household have no symptoms? Will I lose my job? Will we be evicted from our home?

Some degree of fear or uncertainly affected everyone and many turned to trusted authorities for answers. City officials were expected to provide answers and reassure their employees and community members.

Employee Burn-Out

Employees worked hard to deliver services to the public during an unsettling time. It was not uncommon for management employees to work 12 hours a day or longer, and some employees often worked over the weekend. Vacations were put on hold or canceled. With remote options, many who were able to work from home found that they had trouble setting work aside. Some of those interviewed six months after the start of COVID-19 admitted that they still had not taken days off and recognized that time off was necessary for them to recharge. They talked about burn-out but could not see a way to slow down due to the continuing state of emergency.

Labor Relations

A high percentage of City workers are unionized in four different labor unions. Initially, labor unions and management worked well together to support the delivery of services during the pandemic. A major concern for labor was the working conditions that might impact the health and welfare of the workforce.

There were no written protocols on how communication should be conducted between the City and labor unions during times of disaster. Therefore, at different times during the proclaimed disaster, several unions demanded issues be bargained. The negotiating of working conditions is an appropriate bargaining point. However, these negotiations took significant time to accomplish and sometimes complicated the overall response effort. The Recommendations section includes our suggestion to use future labor agreement cycles to negotiate an expedited manner for resolving issues when they arise during a "proclaimed emergency."

OPERATIONAL COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION

Organizational structures such as Incident Command Systems (ICS), an effective EOC, and City departments that coordinated and worked well together were in place long before the COVID-19 pandemic started. Strong leadership and systems that worked during normal times provided a

solid base as changes were required to successfully navigate new methods of service delivery.

Citywide Coordination

A common theme of Citywide coordination and cooperation appeared during interviews of managers in various departments. City Council Members worked well with the City Manager's Office and departments before the virus arrived which helped set the tone and create an environment for success in dealing with an unexpected widespread disruption such as COVID-19. Policy level conference calls that were held daily at first and were led by the City Manager, set the tone for department directors and managers, encouraging communication and coordination between departments.

City employees work well together. Departments support one another and individuals within departments demonstrate an overall attitude of working together to meet their missions. Actions taken during the first three months of this COVID-19 pandemic virus clearly follow the community vision statement shown on page 2.

Communication with Staff

In general, the internal communications for the City were effective. A significant effort was made by the City Manager to provide information to all staff on what was known at the time and the actions being taken by the City. These communications also contained appropriate recognition to staff who were dealing with rapid changes to their working conditions, and there was some significant concern for the personal welfare of staff and their families. These City Manager communications were cited many times in the interviews that were conducted for this report. Examples of the City Manager's emails are included in **Appendix 5: Sample City Manager Global Messages.**

Department directors also communicated with their individual staff members. To one degree or another, they sought to amplify the communications coming from the City Manager and to add their own voices in providing information and affirmation to employees. This was done via email and in some cases by leaders visiting individuals. This included essential staff still working in City facilities or in remote locations.

The individual connections made with City staff were very beneficial. This was true especially early in the response as the extent of the coronavirus and its transmission vectors were not fully understood and were in fact being discovered, modified and discussed in the media on almost a daily basis. It should be noted that some employees' needs for information could not be satisfied, as some facts were simply not available given the uncertainty of the situation.

Internal communication in an organization as large and complex as the City is understandably challenging in the best of times. Internal communication during a public health crisis is particularly challenging, and learnings and opportunities for improvement are noted in the Recommendations section.

Emergency Operations Center (EOC)

The EOC was opened immediately to coordinate emergency response. The early establishment of the EOC as the place for coordination of the incident and effectiveness of the EOC in coordinating

activities were key factors in the City's success. Led by the City's Emergency Manager, staffing included City personnel from departments, many of whom had participated in EOC activations for incidents or disaster exercises. In addition, liaisons from key organizations, maintained contact with the EOC either in person or remotely. EOC trainings were often mentioned as being critical to the successful operation of the EOC and overall coordination for the COVID-19 response.

The media was invited into the Kirkland EOC where they toured and had a firsthand view of the City's response. It helped build a positive impression of the City and provided transparency and better communication with the public.

Interagency Coordination

This virus does not recognize jurisdictional boundaries. It was important for the City of Kirkland to engage in communication and coordination with neighboring cities, counties, Washington State, and even federal agencies. Disasters are generally local or regional, but in this case the virus was not just national, but worldwide. While mutual aid was used initially to assist with aid calls while Kirkland Fire Department personnel were in isolation or quarantine, those options were not available once confirmation was received that the virus had spread across the county, state, and nation.

Liaisons to the Kirkland EOC from Public Health - Seattle & King County and the Governor's Office were present on-site during the early days of EOC activation. The liaisons not only provided information from their organizations but were able to gather information from the City to assist their leaders in decision making.

Lake Washington Institute of Technology (LWIT) students and a staff member tested positive for COVID-19 in early March and were placed in quarantine. LWIT employees were provided space at City Hall in close proximity to the Kirkland EOC in order to share information and coordinate activities. Since the Police and Fire departments also had quarantined employees, LWIT leaders were able to capitalize on the City's experience as school officials determined the appropriate course of action for their students and staff.

In the early days of COVID-19 response, the Kirkland Fire Department requested mutual aid from neighboring jurisdictions to assist with calls to the original long-term care facility. Several City first responders were in quarantine or isolation, so response personnel were diminished for the 14-day quarantine period.

CONTINUATION OF CITY SERVICES

As noted above, continuation of City services was a priority established by the City at the beginning of this pandemic. No employees were furloughed and while some services were suspended or delivery altered, there were no decisions made to stop City services in the long-term.

Initial Field Response

The Police and Fire departments worked together to minimize exposure to COVID-19 when responding to medical calls and death investigations. The City EOC was quick to order and maintain a good stock of PPE, which was never significantly depleted, allowing for adequate

supplies for staff. The Fire Department assisted the Police Department in fitting N95 masks, and police procedures were modified to limit the number of personnel who responded to death investigations.

Police modified procedures such as encouraging online reporting of certain crimes, limiting minor traffic stops, and asking reporting parties to meet officers outside rather than inside homes or businesses. Reports of crime fell initially, but as the weeks passed, crime levels generally returned to normal.

The Public Works and Parks & Community Services departments also had personnel who worked in the field and engaged in regular contact with the public. Wearing PPE, extra cleaning and sanitizing of equipment, and social distancing practices were incorporated into daily assignments.

Alternate Work Assignments, Schedules, or Venues

By the end of March, many employees were no longer conducting business as usual, either in the field or in in-office positions. Many employees worked from home or worked part time from home. Employees who could perform work remotely could request a remote work option. With schools and daycare closing, remote work helped employees juggle family with work. Working from home also limited the number of non-family contacts, reducing the chance of becoming infected by COVID-19. Some employees served in alternate positions, including staffing the EOC.

Some departments that provided services in the field divided workers into crews with alternating schedules. One week, "Crew A" would work in the field and "Crew B" would stay home but remain available for emergency calls. The next week "Crew B" would work in the field and "Crew A" would stay home.

Another option was to reduce multiple employees working in confined areas by offering alternate work schedules, thereby reducing the number of people working in the office at any given time. Every department maintained some staff working at their normal workstations or in the same work areas as before, but socially distanced from others also at work. Some employees preferred coming to work, and the reduced density of people in a building allowed them to do so.

Information Technology

Supervisors had to find ways to reassure and communicate effectively with their employees, remotely. Zoom, Skype, Microsoft Teams, and email were used by various departments. There were employees where computer-based communications did not work, so cell phones or landline phones were used.

The IT Department was very busy during the initial weeks of the arrival of COVID-19. IT staff recommended and implemented actions that were instrumental in allowing City functions to continue with as little disruption as possible. Activities included:

▪ Developing a software application that streamlined health checks of first responders.

▪ Purchasing multiple Zoom accounts for City departments so their work from remote sites could be easier.

▪ Accelerating Kirkland's use of cloud services.

▪ Executing the purchase and preparation of laptop computers to include security and software

necessary for employees to perform work remotely.

▪ Recommending and purchasing equipment such as headphones to help staff manage high volumes of calls.

City Online Services

While the City of Kirkland offered web services prior to COVID-19 arriving in the community, it became apparent that more services could be delivered remotely. Some City services moved to online service only. For some functions such as paying City utility bills, drop off locations were created, and self-serve kiosks located at City Hall provided access to City services for those without computer access.

For those who needed additional assistance or to talk with City personnel, telephone, video chat, and even personal contact were made available.

One department that was very successful moving to online services was the Planning & Building Department. The issuance of permits decreased in April but by May it was almost at the same level as May 2019 permits.

Financial Health

The City of Kirkland has budgeted conservatively since the great Recession in 2008, with a focus on replenishing reserves. The Contingency Reserve Fund, Rainy Day Fund, and Revenue Stabilization Reserve were all full as the City experienced its first COVID-19 cases. The City was able to focus on providing emergency services and making resources available without worrying about financing the initial emergency response.

The City was already preparing for a revenue deficit in 2021 due to the loss of funds from an annexation incentive program provided by Washington State when the City annexed the Juanita-Finn Hill-Kingsgate area from King County. Though the City had reserve funds available for emergency purchases during the initial weeks of COVID-19, further reductions of funding will remain a concern.

Utility services provided or managed by the City include garbage, recycling, and yard waste collection, water, and sewer. The State of Washington implemented a moratorium on shutting off utility services for nonpayment, which has negatively impacted revenues. City parks and City-owned facilities that were often rented for weddings and other events were closed, resulting in revenue loss. Other revenue losses include a decline in sales tax revenues.

PUBLIC INFORMATION

The delivery of accurate, reliable, and timely information is a goal that the City strives to meet during normal times but is critical during emergencies such as COVID-19. Information regarding health, safety, actions the City is taking, and actions the community should take are all considered and addressed through different methods of communication.

Information Sharing

Not only was managing the press an extra workload for a City that does not normally receive

national attention, but government officials from across the country inundated City staff with questions about how they were managing the response. Initially, staff fielded questions as best they could while also realizing that it was important that the information shared should be consistent. In mid-March, the Emergency Manager put together a white paper on the City's early response which is included in **Appendix 4: Early Response – White Paper**. It provided information that could be sent to other organizations shortening phone conversations and providing a common message.

The City's public website contains information specific to COVID-19 and provides guidance for residents and businesses. The City sent a postcard to every residence in multiple languages that provided key phone numbers for City services as well as a link to the City website, where multiple resources are identified regarding health, financial assistance, and public services available *(Appendix 6: Public Information)*.

Staff from various departments and teams such as Parks & Community Services, Police, Fire, and Emergency Management also provided briefings of their early response to attendees of various discipline related meetings. Formal presentations as well as questions were fielded by employees who were able to share their experiences.

Joint Information Center

A City employee-staffed Joint Information Center (JIC) [8] was located at the EOC, which served as one of two primary efforts dealing with disaster public information. Staffing for this function came from line departments. These were City personnel who provide public outreach and education but do not routinely converse with the media in their daily work assignments. They handled the majority of social media inputs and responses during the pandemic. The key social media platforms used by the City include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Nextdoor.

One of the efforts at rumor control included monitoring the five or so more active neighborhood groups that are operational in the community. If there were unfounded rumors or incorrect information occurring, they countered that messaging not by engaging directly, but by putting out accurate information on the City's platforms.

Media Interviews

The second major public information effort focused on the media. Though there had been a reported case of the virus in Washington State early in 2020, the community of Kirkland was the first community to experience verified community spread with multiple patients and deaths. Media arrived quickly and national news stories were delivered every evening for several days until cases were discovered elsewhere.

Some national media interview requests were perceived as looking to draw the City into the "coronavirus politics" that had begun to engulf the nation. It was a deliberate strategy of the City's leadership to not become engaged in these partisan national discussions.

Media interviews were primarily handled by the Mayor and the City Manager. These were

---

[8] In emergency management, a JIC is a central, physical location where communications staff can coordinate external communications about the emergency and receive requests for information from the media or others.

arranged by the Communications Manager with all media requests being funneled through the Communications Manager. Interview requests were sorted by priority with local and regional media outlets having top priority. Subsequently this prioritization has helped in local media relationships coming out of the response. Other City staff were engaged as appropriate, depending on the interview request. For example, the Fire Chief handled more operationally focused interviews.

There were many more interview requests than could be met with City resources. Requests coming to appear on talk shows were not deemed to be relevant to the needs of the City. The Recommendations section includes future considerations for how to best respond to the large volume of media inquiries that may accompany future emergencies.

Recommendations

This section discusses relatively larger challenges and opportunities for improvement identified under **Observations**, including:

- Decision Making During Disasters

- Calibrating the Return to Normal Operations

- Documentation

- Internal Communications

- Remote Work

- Public Information

- Risk Management

- Labor Relations

- Employee Wellness

These topics, as well as a few additional, relatively smaller points, are addressed in the **Improvement Plan**.

DECISION MAKING DURING DISASTERS

Issue: With the activation of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC), the decision making mechanisms necessary for the City to make quick decisions were enabled. This entailed shifting to a decision making process in which decisions were made in a more streamlined, centralized manner, without the involvement of a broader set of internal stakeholders as is typical practice for the City. This shift was not always accompanied by efforts to make decision making transparent for parties not present during policy making sessions, largely due to the press of time in an uncertain and quickly evolving environment.

Recommendation: Decision makers need to recognize the progression of the emergency and be prepared to transparently modify decision making processes, making all aware of the shift. This explicit shift should be accompanied by assigning a designated note taker for policy meetings to capture decisions and direction for implementation. To calibrate its ability to shift from one decision making process to another, the City should continue to use disaster exercises to practice transition periods that move from standard decision making to crisis decision making and then to stabilized decision making

CALIBRATING THE RETURN TO NORMAL OPERATIONS

Issue: Eagerness for a full resumption of City functioning can distract from an effective response by competing for scarce attention and resources.

Recommendation: It is important to communicate the ongoing nature of the incident and its continuing impact on the City even well after the heart of the crisis has passed. Leadership staff, as well as City Council Members, can amplify these messages and help set appropriate

expectations with staff, board and commission members, the public, and other stakeholders. Onboarding and refresher training for members of Council, as well as the City's various boards and commissions, should address crisis roles, including an acknowledgement that some advisory bodies or at least their meetings may be suspended during the height of the crisis. A resumption of normal operations may not be possible until the state of emergency is fully resolved and not just stabilized through effective Continuity of Operations/Government functioning.

DOCUMENTATION

Issue: In the initial response to this incident, information and recommendations from trusted sources changed rapidly. City leadership made decisions based on the new information and shared new policies, processes, and procedures with employees, often by email. Employees sometimes had difficulty keeping track of Citywide or department-wide changes, however. Announcement emails were easily lost in large volumes of email and long emails that had policy changes or directives embedded within them could easily be missed or read, and then inadvertently erased or moved.

Recommendation: Staff suggested the need for a centralized location where all directives from City leaders and managers could be stored in written form and consistently updated as policies and procedures changed. Verbal and emailed communication is difficult for staff to track. Policy documents that are written in a timely manner should include basic information of who made the policy, its details, when it will start and end, and where it will occur. Procedures that specify how the action should be implemented will likely follow most policies and may vary by department.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Issue: Several employees indicated in the employee survey that they received excellent communication from their own department director but heard from colleagues in other departments that they received very little communication from their director. Other employees reported receiving less information or different information from their director than employees in other departments. This survey dissonance indicates a lack of uniformity in how information was sometimes transmitted down the chain of command within the City's leadership infrastructure. A concerted effort is needed by department leaders to transmit information to their employees and perhaps even help interpret that information for their departmental personnel.

Recommendation: Common understanding of leadership decisions is needed across all departments. Establishing a common formal mechanism across all departments for transmittal of policy decisions or updates is recommended. It may be necessary for department directors to tailor their messaging techniques and methodology to their workforce. It is also important to highlight that just because a message was transmitted once does not mean it has been absorbed and understood by all staff. Repeated messaging and alternative methods can help.

REMOTE WORK

Issue: Remote work was often found to be an effective alternative to having many staff reporting to a City facility to work. Many initial equipment and connectivity issues were resolved fairly quickly as City-owned laptop computers were issued to staff who needed them. This did not resolve every issue, however. Some City staff working remotely did not have high speed internet

connections or were forced to use personal phones for dealing with the general public or calling colleagues. It should be noted that cyberattacks are now being made on mobile devices in addition to computers. Having staff use personally owned mobile devices can make them more vulnerable to these attacks. Additionally, some employees reported productivity losses due to home office environments that were less effective than their City office environment e.g., one monitor/screen instead of two, inadequate desk chair.

In addition to equipment-related concerns, some employees cited differing interpretations of how the Governor's "Stay Home, Stay Safe" proclamation, which gave local governments flexibility to designate essential staff who should continue to report to their place of work, applied to different positions.

Remote work challenges may continue as it is anticipated that the pandemic will continue well into 2021 and perhaps into 2022.

Recommendation: With the pandemic continuing, every effort should be made to enable remote workers to have the tools to successfully perform their work tasks and protect their individual privacy. The City should establish policies that allow employees to move some hardware (e.g., dual monitors, desk chairs) from City facilities to home offices during long-term emergencies that require remote work. Additionally, the security of all devices, both computer and mobile, should be assessed and steps taken to have security protocols in place and followed. It may be necessary to add cybersecurity training for mobile device users.

In the midst of the pandemic response, each department acted unilaterally to select staff to work from home or report to the office. While some department flexibility is desired, it would be beneficial to have a standard City process of evaluation for these decisions, which would add some consistency and transparency to decision making. This also would enhance the quality of decision making and dialogue between the City and labor groups. During an emergency, it may be essential that directors and managers accommodate remote work when guidelines are established that articulate how and when remote working is appropriate. It will also be beneficial to establish performance metrics for specific remote working positions where appropriate.

PUBLIC INFORMATION

Issue: Due to the community of Kirkland being the initial epicenter for the national outbreak of COVID-19, the eyes of the nation and media turned toward the City for information on the outbreak of the disease. The Communications Manager was the point person for all media contacts. She arranged for the appropriate City personnel to be interviewed. There were many more requests for interviews than time and personnel could accommodate.

Recommendation: Reporters can be somewhat like alligators. If you feed them, they will back off, at least for a short period of time, but if you don't feed them, they will find another source of information that may not be accurate and consistent with City messaging, which could lead to avoidable public confusion.

One recommendation for dealing with the media is to hold news conferences at regular intervals to efficiently provide information and reduce the need for staff to respond to individual requests for interviews. The Communications Manager becomes the gatekeeper, but City leaders should plan to participate as elected and subject matter experts or spokespeople. The news conference

is controlled by delivering the message the City wants delivered to the public: the facts related to the emergency as best they are known. It is appropriate to highlight successes while being as transparent as possible about challenges and unknowns. The City should develop media briefing packets and fact sheets to help reporters write their story. A location for hosting these news conferences needs to be identified in advance of the next disaster.

While press conferences are efficient ways to address press interest, it is also important to grant interviews where possible, recognizing that controversial issues will likely be brought forward and be prepared to talk about tough questions. More staff capacity may be needed in the future to handle interviews and field questions. Advance designation and practice will provide staff other than the Communications Manager the ability to absorb some demands and avoid overwhelming communications staff.

RISK MANAGEMENT

Issue: The function of risk management is housed in the City's Human Resources Department and the HR Director is the City's Risk Manager. The response to the pandemic highlighted the many unknowns that needed to be addressed when faced with incomplete information and in an environment of extreme ambiguity with little to no precedents to be followed. It appears that the City Manager, City Attorney, and Emergency Manager collectively addressed risk issues as they arose during the response. While having risk management as an additional duty is cost effective, having a risk management professional dedicated to look at risks could provide more protection for the City and its actions. Having a dedicated Risk Manager is like having a dedicated "Safety Officer" for incident response. There is a total focus on risk versus dividing the attention of the person(s) performing the function.

Recommendation: The City is economizing by not staffing the risk management function with a professional risk manager. Instead it is relying on the experience and judgement of existing personnel under the direction of the HR Director and WCIA resources. While this approach worked for this incident, a dedicated professional risk manager serving the City would provide additional capacity in this critical function. The benefits of having a professional Emergency Manager was evident from the City's response. Likewise, it is likely that the same level of superior performance, in planning and execution, could be realized by staffing up with a dedicated risk management professional. The function could of course be outsourced, but the recommendation is only do so to a firm with strong risk management qualifications.

It should be noted that there is a close alignment between risk management and the duties of the City Attorney's Office. That may be a better location for the risk management function because of the breadth of responsibilities and issue visibility that the office has in providing services to all the departments.

LABOR RELATIONS

Issue: There are multiple bargaining units within the City. These all require separate labor agreements with elements that must be negotiated. With the onset of the coronavirus emergency, legitimate, potential health and safety issues were raised by labor. During normal circumstances, these issues would be managed through a formal negotiation process. Because of these

established agreements, when these issues were raised at the height of the emergency and the disaster response, the typical negotiation process was initially applied. While legally required by contract to negotiate these items of concern, they were a significant distraction and consumed an inordinate amount of time for key City staff.

Recommendation: When negotiating future labor agreements with the City's different bargaining units, attempt to negotiate an expedited manner for resolving issues when they arise during a "proclaimed emergency." This is not to eliminate the right of labor to raise legitimate concerns, but rather to establish protocols that expedite resolution while protecting labor's right to raise health and safety concerns.

EMPLOYEE WELLNESS

Issue: The discovery of the coronavirus in Kirkland was not completely unforeseen, but its first appearance in Kirkland and the extent to which it consumed the City's staff in responding to the incident was a surprise. This is especially true of the leadership of the City, including the Mayor, Council, City Manager, and department directors.

This was an "all hands on-deck" response, with department directors committed to the disaster response for months on end. There were extremely long workdays of 16 hours or more for weeks at a time. Several department directors mentioned having few, if any, days off for three months. While staff dedication and commitment to public service is admirable, individuals' mental acuity and decision making capacity can decline significantly when stressed for long periods of time.

Recommendation: This pandemic is likely not the last disaster that will require such an intense and extended response effort from City staff — and it is obviously not over yet. Disaster research has shown that mandating a two-day break after a long period of exertion, as experienced in this disaster, allows staff to refresh their bodies and minds to perform better when they return to work. City leadership should look at how they develop staffing alternatives and enable deputies to assume departmental leadership for a few days in order to give principals an opportunity to catch their breath. For some personalities, it may require an enforced "time off" message to have them take a break, including a directive to not respond to emails.

Doing the above also provides for leadership building and succession planning opportunities that can be accomplished by cross training for City staff to assume positions of authority during emergencies and disaster exercises. It has been said that "the cemeteries are full of indispensable people."

Improvement Plan

The Improvement Plan (IP) identifies actions that can be taken to help shape a jurisdiction's preparedness priorities and support continuous improvement. Recommendations captured in the IP are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART).

Keeping people engaged in actions that are "in addition" to regular duties can be a challenge. The City Manager should appoint and authorize an individual to coordinate efforts to plan for, implement, and report on progress for each recommendation identified in the IP. This IP Lead will work with department directors to identify project leads for each recommendation in the IP. In some cases, one department may be responsible for multiple recommendations so they may need to prioritize or adjust timelines for completion of some tasks. Periodic progress reports from the IP Lead (monthly or quarterly) should be delivered to the City Manager and department directors during management team meetings. Having the review of progress in management team meetings will help with accountability. Workshops may be useful to work on specific tasks and can help maintain engagement by project leads and provide a forum for input and coordination from others who might be impacted.

An IP chart is available in **Appendix 1: Improvement Plan** that shows the issue, recommended action, department or office to lead the action, supporting organizations, the start of efforts, and completion of the task. An additional column is available for brief comments such as dependencies on other items being completed, funding required, or additional resources needed. These recommendations may be broad, indicating that subtasks will need to be identified, or they may be very specific.

Conclusions

The City of Kirkland was placed in the unenviable position of being the first community in the country to be significantly impacted by the coronavirus. The discovery of cases and then deaths from the virus reoriented the focus of City government to that of continuing to provide City services while protecting the community and City employees.

Because COVID-19 was a novel disease, medical information changed over time and the City did its best to adapt to the new information as it became available. Initially, there were significant impacts to the Fire and Police departments as quarantine and isolation protocols were put in place. Within only a few weeks, the City shifted to many employees working remotely. Information sharing was a strong point for City leadership, with efforts made to keep employees informed during a very stressful period especially early in the pandemic.

The City started this incident in a healthy position. This was true for the City's financial position, the leadership climate in the City, and for the relationship between the City Manager and his directors and the City Council. These characteristics helped significantly in implementing rapid changes in governance protocols early in the timeline of the incident.

While there is never a perfect response, the City had laid the foundation for a positive outcome by investing in good government principles and team-building that sustained the functioning of the City during a very stressful period. While operations have stabilized at this time, the City should not let its guard down due to the virus remaining active in the nation and regional community.

A LOOK TO THE FUTURE

People and organizations, including businesses within the Kirkland community, are looking forward to returning to an operational environment similar to that which existed in January 2020. It is unlikely that we will completely return to that point in time. This pandemic has most likely changed how we live, conduct business, and provide government services. The impact of COVID-19 is likely to have many other profound impacts on society moving into the future.

What will happen in the fall and winter of 2020-2021 is not clear. Experts are predicting that the season could be very challenging with the entire medical system—from pre-hospital to hospital and intensive care systems—being overwhelmed due not only to the coronavirus but the simultaneous onset of the flu season. There is a popular expectation that the development of a vaccine will allow for a return to normal. However, the production capacity for a vaccine and the distribution of the vaccine will be challenging. Current estimates are that the vaccine may not be widely available until the third or possibly the fourth quarter of 2021, although encouraging vaccine trial reports were made in mid-November. There is also an expectation that many people will be reluctant to get vaccinated even when it does become available.

These factors along with still unknown characteristics of the virus, such as whether it will mutate like the flu virus, make the future difficult to predict. It is also an indicator that the end of our days of fighting the impacts of the virus are not in sight.

The City of Kirkland has a strong foundation upon which to build its continued response to the coronavirus. The recommendations in this report and the measures outlined in the Improvement Plan are a good starting place building on the City's strengths to prepare for future challenges.

Appendices

APPENDIX 1: IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Area of Improvement	Recommendation	Lead	Support	Start	End	Other (dependencies, resources, budget)
Decision Making – Decisions were sometimes made without clarity of the process or determination of urgency to allow consideration of stakeholder inclusion. Decisions were not always transparently communicated in part due to the press of time.	Clarify the crisis decision making process and identify a method of documenting decisions made during an incident. During disaster exercises, practice transition periods that move from crisis decision making to stabilized decision making.	OEM	CMO, Department Leadership	Jan 2021	Ongoing	Becomes part of progressive disaster exercise program
Calibrating the Return to Normalcy. Rush to resume normal functioning while in stable but ongoing emergency state.	Address emergency adaptations in onboarding and refresher trainings for Council, board, and commission members.	OEM	CMO	Jan 2021	Ongoing	
Documentation – Employees had difficulty keeping track of directives that were shared via email.	Establish procedures to move new or updated directives into a centralized location accessible to employees and made known to them.	HR	CMO, Department Leadership	Jan 2021	Mar 2021	

Area of Improvement	Recommendation	Lead	Support	Start	End	Other (dependencies, resources, budget)
Internal Communications – Employees reported that information shared from top management was not always received by employees of all departments.	Develop Citywide protocols for transmitting policy decisions and vital information throughout all departments.	HR	CMO, City Attorney, Department Directors	Jan 2021	Mar 2021	
Remote Work – The telework policy did not account for large numbers of staff necessarily working remotely for long periods of time.	Explore options to set a standard evaluative process for determining when and how employees should be approved to work remotely for extended periods of time. Evaluation should include resource requirements, City operational needs, and performance measures.	HR	Department Directors	Dec 2020	Mar 2021	Labor Unions
Remote Work – Employees working from home who used their personal phones to communicate with the public and colleagues expressed privacy concerns and experienced reduced productivity.	Explore technology solutions that allow employees to seamlessly use City phone numbers when working remotely, such as VOIP integrations for Skype or Microsoft Teams, or purchasing City-owned cell phones.	IT	Departments with primary responsibility for public customer service.	Dec 2020	Mar 2021	Funding of new/enhanced equipment

Area of Improvement	Recommendation	Lead	Support	Start	End	Other (dependencies, resources, budget)
Remote Work – Some employees surveyed reported productivity losses due to home office set-ups that were less effective than their City office set-up (e.g., one monitor/screen instead of two, inadequate desk chair).	Establish policies that address employee productivity issues as they relate to work flow and equipment (e.g., dual monitors, desk chairs) leveraged from City facilities to home offices during long-term emergencies when remote work is an operational consideration.	HR	IT	Dec 2020	Mar 2021	
Public Information – There were many inquiries for information from media and not enough personnel to meet all requests.	Identify individuals who can supplement tasks performed by the Communications Manager. Train and exercise them in all aspects including creation of media packets, working with media during interviews, and practicing the best way to deliver messages, including news conferences at key intervals to efficiently meet media interests.	OEM Asst City Manager	Communications Manager All Departments	Dec 2020	Apr 2021	
Risk Management – Risk management issues were addressed by the City Attorney, HR Director and Emergency Manager	Evaluate the City's approach to risk management and identify opportunities for increased capability and internal assignment of responsible for this function, e.g. a professional risk manager.	HR	City Attorney, CMO	Dec 2020	Jun 2021	

Area of Improvement	Recommendation	Lead	Support	Start	End	Other (dependencies, resources, budget)
Labor Unions – With the onset of the coronavirus emergency, legitimate health and safety issues were raised by labor. Formal protocols with labor unions during disasters were not in place forcing management to divert attention away from other time critical issues in order to negotiate with labor unions.	Develop protocols between labor unions and City management that will be used during times of disaster to support timely bargaining needs.	HR	City Attorney, labor unions	Jan 2021	Dec 2021	Labor Unions
Employee Wellbeing – Those who were tasked with key roles where others depended on their being at work felt they were needed every day and either could not or would not take days off, leading to decreased efficiency and burnout.	Develop policies that support key employees to take time off work, even during emergencies or disasters. This includes policies related to line of succession identification, delegation of authority, and training of identified succession staff to create capable depth in key positions.	HR	All Departments	Jan 2021	Dec 2021	Labor Unions

Area of Improvement	Recommendation	Lead	Support	Start	End	Other (dependencies, resources, budget)
Employee Wellbeing – Key positions that fill essential functions should have redundancy. By identifying and training additional staff to perform key tasks, primary employees could better manage their own wellbeing and the City would know the essential function was performed.	Review positions identified in the COOP to determine which may benefit from additional depth in trained employees to perform key tasks. Provide an opportunity for employees to perform alternate key functions during exercises.	OEM	All Departments	Jan 2021	Sep 2021	Labor Unions
Planning – Some functions that were not identified as "essential" in the COOP were required during this pandemic.	Update COOP – Review essential functions Citywide, considering limited service or resources over extended time frames.	OEM	CMO, All Departments	Mar 2021	Sep 2021	

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEWS

Protocol for Interviews with City Staff

Context Setting
1. When you heard that COVID-19 was active in your community, what were your initial concerns with regards to your department and how you conduct business?
2. How did your service delivery change in March?
3. Did State or County orders or decisions impact your ability to perform essential services?
4. How did you decide which employees would be eligible or directed to work from home? How did you decide which employees were essential?

Policy Direction and Operational Specifics
5. Beyond face masks, hand washing, and surface sanitation, what additional personal protective measures were required to ensure safety of your employees as they performed their work in a City facility?
6. What IT challenges did you or your staff face as normal work processes were modified?
7. Do you feel that communication from City leaders was timely and clear?
8. Were there any policy ambiguities or policy gaps?
9. What challenges, if any, did you have in communicating with your own staff?
10. Was the City website updated to reflect changes in service delivery to the community?

Concluding Thoughts
11. The City's Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) identifies mission essential functions and mission essential staff positions. Has your opinion changed as to which functions and staff positions are essential?
12. How did disaster exercises conducted in the past help you and your staff respond to COVID-19?
13. How did COVID impact your ability to respond to non-COVID projects or calls for service?
14. Are there policies or projects that are being redesigned to help mitigate the spread of disease?
15. What do you think your department or City leaders did well during the first three months following the announcement of COVID in Kirkland?
16. What do you think your department or City leaders could have done better in the first three months following the announcement of COVID in Kirkland?

Protocol for Interviews with Liaisons and Partners

1. What role did you play in the City of Kirkland's pandemic response?
2. How did you perform this role? Were you ever physically present in Kirkland City Hall or the EOC, or were all activities accomplished remotely?
3. What is your overall impression for how cities in King County responded to the pandemic and how did the City of Kirkland measure up as compared to other organizations with which you have familiarity?
4. Do you have any recommendations or suggestions about how the City of Kirkland might improve their future response to this pandemic or a future pandemic?
5. Did you receive timely information from City staff to support your response actions and decisions?

List of Interviewees, by Title

City of Kirkland

City Attorney's Office

- City Attorney

City Council

- Mayor

City Manager's Office

- City Manager

- Deputy City Manager

- Assistant City Manager

- Communications Program Manager

Finance & Administration

- Director

- Financial Operations Manager

Fire

- Chief

- Deputy Chief

- Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Captain

Human Resources

- Manager

Information Technology

- Deputy Director

Municipal Court

- Presiding Judge

Parks & Community Services

- Director

Planning & Building

- Director

Police

- Chief

- Deputy Chief

Public Works

- Interim Director

Liaisons and Partners

EvergreenHealth Medical Center

- Emergency Manager/Safety Manager

King County Office of Emergency Management

- Zone 1 Coordinator

Lake Washington Institute of Technology

- President

- Public Information Officer/Communications Manager

Lake Washington School District

- Emergency Manager/Liaison to Kirkland EOC

Public Health – Seattle & King County

- Liaison to Kirkland EOC

APPENDIX 3: EMPLOYEE SURVEY

Survey Instrument

City of Kirkland COVID-19 Response After Action Report (AAR)

Employee Survey (SurveyMonkey)
The City of Kirkland has contracted BERK Consulting to produce an after-action report (AAR) on the City's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This report:

▪ <u>Is</u> focused on **organizational impacts** of the pandemic on departments and the City's ability to maintain general **government operations and service provision.** This includes support for City employees as they continued to provide service to Kirkland residents and businesses.

▪ Is <u>not</u> focused on the City's response from an emergency management, field first response, or health/public health perspective.

The goal is to improve the City's response to future pandemics and other disasters.
As part of this report, we are seeking information from employees on their experiences between **March 1 and May 31, 2020**. All responses will be **confidential.**

1. Which City department do you work for?
   - City Attorney's Office
   - City Council
   - City Manager's Office
   - Finance & Administration
   - Fire
   - Human Resources
   - Information Technology
   - Municipal Court
   - Parks & Community Services
   - Planning & Building
   - Police
   - Public Works

2. Did you work from home at any point between March 1 and May 31?
   - Yes
   - No

3. (If Yes to Question 2): How was your productivity affected by working from home?
   - I was more productive
   - I was less productive
   - My productivity was about the same
   - Don't know/Not sure

4. (If Yes to Question 2): What had the greatest impact on your ability to successfully work from home? _____

5. (If Yes to Question 2): Which of the following items did you use while Remote Work? (check all that apply)
   - Personal desktop computer
   - Personal laptop
   - Personal phone
   - City-owned desktop computer
   - City-owned laptop

o   City-owned phone

o   Other: _____

6. How would you rate the City's communication with you about decisions that impacted your role as an employee?

1 = I received no communication about decisions that impacted my role; 5 = I received extensive communication about decisions that impacted my role 1 2 3 4 5

7. Please check all that apply:

	The City Manager	Your Department Director	Your Supervisor
I **received** communication (e.g., emails, memos, phone calls) **from this person** about changes/impacts to my role due to the pandemic			
I **read/listened to** communication (e.g., emails, memos, phone/video calls) **from this person** about changes/impacts to my role due to the pandemic			

8. How would you rate the helpfulness of the communication you received from the following individuals about change/impacts to your role?

1 = Not helpful at all, 5 = very helpful
o   The City Manager: 1 2 3 4 5 N/A
o   Your Department Director: 1 2 3 4 5 N/A
o   Your Supervisor: 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

9. How would you rate the City's pandemic response in the following areas, in terms of the impact on your ability to do your work?

1 = worst possible response, 5 = best possible response	1	2	3	4	5
Technology (e.g., access to video conferencing software, availability of laptops when Remote Work, etc.)					
Ability to communicate/coordinate with your team (your supervisor, peers, etc.)					
Pay and benefits (e.g., access to paid leave, flexibility in working schedule, etc.)					
Clarity of work expectations for you as an employee					

10. How would you rate the City government's overall response to the pandemic?
    (1 = worst possible response, 5 = best possible response) 1 2 3 4 5

11. Is there anything else you would like to share about the City's response to COVID-19?

Survey Results

Of the 640 employees who received the survey link, approximately one-third (215 employees) completed the survey. Exhibit 4 summarizes the count of survey responses by department.

Exhibit 4. Count of Survey Responses, by Department

Note: "Other" includes departments which had fewer than 10 survey respondents. These included the City Attorney's Office, City Council, City Manager's Office, Human Resources, and the Municipal Court.

Sources: City of Kirkland, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Summary of Results

Below is a categorized summary of the results of the employee survey:

- **Remote work:** Most survey respondents (84%) worked remotely at some point from March 1-May 31 and, of these, 86% reported that their productivity had been either unaffected or improved by remote work.

- **Technology:** Overall, respondents reported positive experiences with using City-owned laptops while working remotely. Many respondents (49%) reported using personal cell phones for remote work, with some expressing privacy and productivity concerns about using personal devices.

- **Communication and collaboration:** Respondents reported high levels of engagement with City communications about the pandemic response and, overall, rated communications from their direct supervisors as highly helpful. Identified areas of improvement included: 1) providing a centralized location with all policies and decisions in a written format, and 2) establishing common expectations for information dissemination across departments.

- **Health, wellness, and benefits:** The City's response with regards to pay and benefits was rated very highly by respondents. Some respondents expressed concern that City Hall had not closed quickly enough and that there was stated and unstated pressure to work in the office during the pandemic. Some respondents also expressed a desire for more direct acknowledgment of the mental health impacts of the pandemic.

Remote Work

Of the 215 employees who completed the survey, a majority (84%) indicated that they had worked from home or from a remote location at some point between March 1 and May 31. The percentage of employees who reported working from home varied by department and, unsurprisingly, was related to the department's function and service delivery model. Among survey respondents in the Fire Department, just 40% indicated they had worked remotely at some point between March and May, while 98% of survey respondents in Planning & Building indicated they had worked remotely at some point (Exhibit 5).

Exhibit 5. Percentage of Survey Respondents who Reported Remote Work, March-May 2020
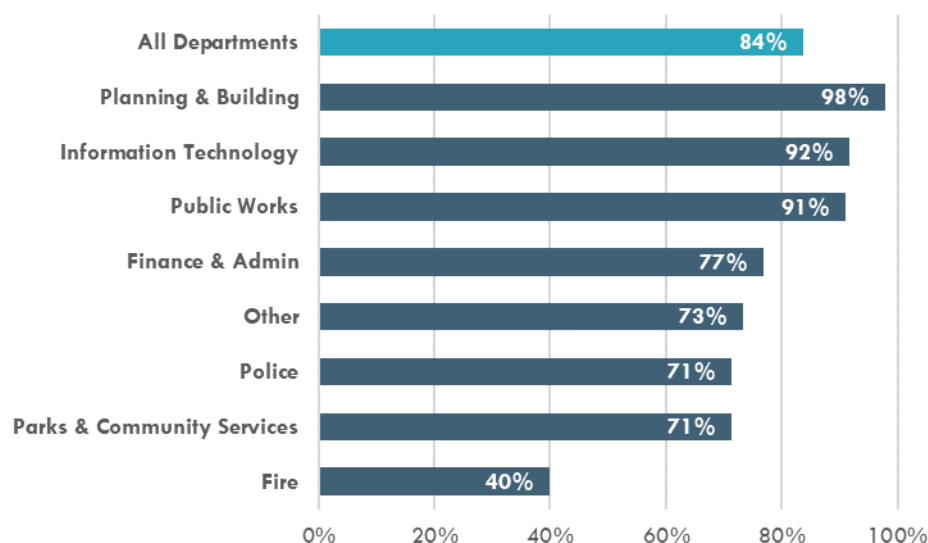
Note: "Other" includes departments which had fewer than 10 survey respondents. These included the City Attorney's Office, City Council, City Manager's Office, Human Resources, and the Municipal Court.

Sources: City of Kirkland, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Productivity

A majority (86%) of respondents who had worked remotely at any point reported that their productivity was either unaffected (45%) or improved (41%) by working remotely (Exhibit 6). Self-reported impacts to productivity varied by department type (Exhibit 7).

Among employees who work in departments that are primarily field based (Fire, Police), 29% reported that they were less productive when working remotely during the initial pandemic period. This finding is intuitive, as these departments are designed around employees interacting face-to-face with members of the public or supporting those who do. Several employees in these departments reported challenges with accessing key databases and computer applications needed for their jobs from a remote location.[9] Still, about 29% of employees in these departments reported increased productivity when working remotely. At least one employee cited

---

[9] It should be noted that this question was only of asked of employees that worked remotely at some point, so the responses do not include patrol officers and firefighters or essential personnel who remained in the field or at City Hall throughout the study time period.

the opportunity to complete more paperwork as a positive productivity impact in the short-term.

For employees who work in departments that are primarily office-based, a large majority (89%) reported that their productivity was either unaffected or improved by working remotely. Interestingly, about two-thirds of employees in these departments reported no impacts to their productivity, possibly because their workflow was primarily computer-based to begin with, and thus similar in a remote environment. Multiple employees cited lack of distractions and interruptions at home compared to in the office and supportive supervisors and managers as positive impacts on their productivity.
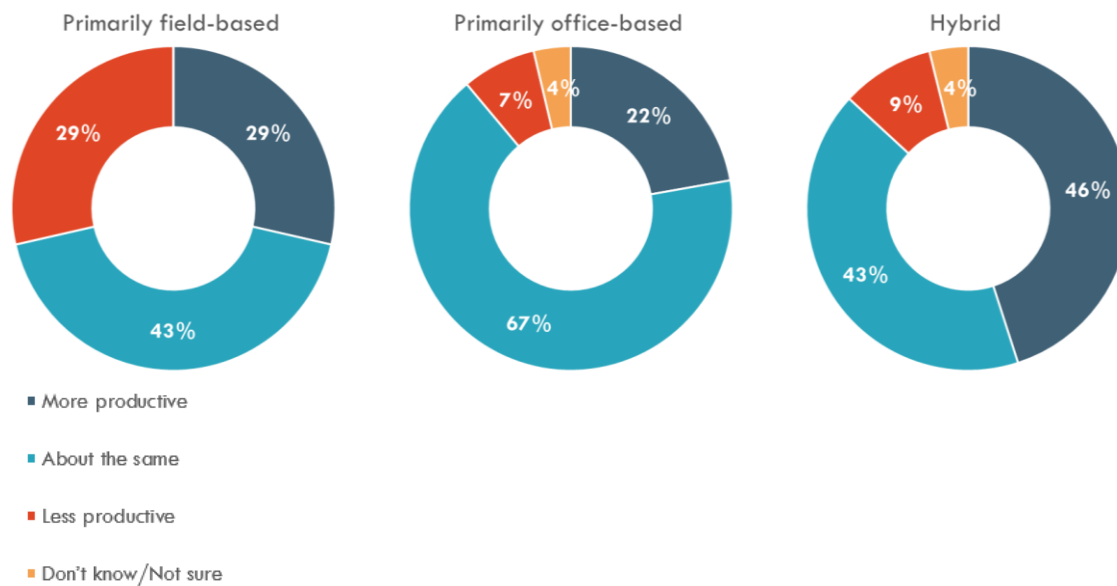
For employees in departments that conduct a significant amount of work both in the office and in the field (here called "hybrid" departments), the majority (88%) reported that their productivity was unaffected or improved by working remotely. A significant minority (46%) reported improved productivity. At least one employee reported that temporarily halting public walk-ins improved their productivity by limiting interruptions to workflow. Other potential causes include modified workflows that reduced travel times (such as video, rather than in-person, building inspections) or eliminated some programs temporarily (such as suspending summer parks programming). While some of these modifications could potentially be continued in the future (such as remote inspections), others (like canceling programming) are obviously not long-term strategies.

Exhibit 6. Self-reported Effects of Working Remotely on Productivity

- More productive
- About the same
- Less productive
- Don't know/Not sure
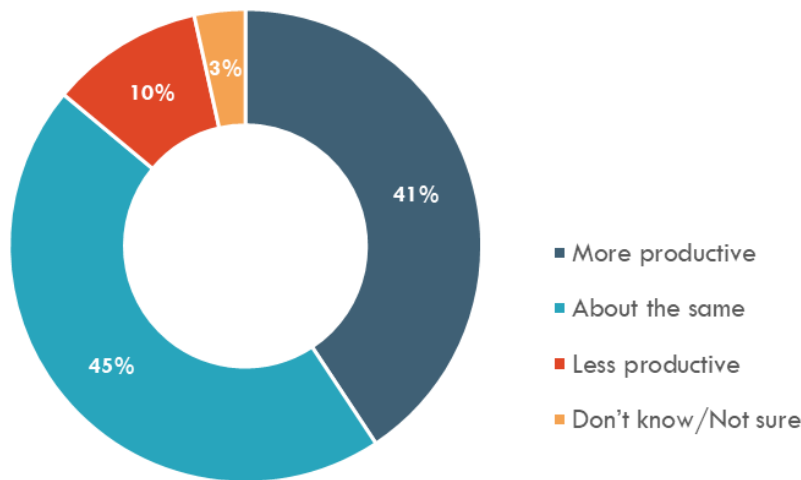
Sources: City of Kirkland, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 7. Self-reported Effects of Working Remotely on Productivity, by Department Type

Primarily field-based | Primarily office-based | Hybrid

Primarily field-based: More productive 29%, About the same 43%, Less productive 29%

Primarily office-based: More productive 22%, About the same 67%, Less productive 7%, Don't know/Not sure 4%

Hybrid: More productive 46%, About the same 43%, Less productive 9%, Don't know/Not sure 4%

- More productive
- About the same
- Less productive
- Don't know/Not sure

Note: Departments included in "primarily field-based" include departments where the majority of employees work from a non-office location a majority of the time (Fire, Police). "Primarily office-based" includes departments where the majority of employees work from an office the majority of the time and/or have limited face-to-face interaction with the public (City Attorney's Office, City Council, City Manager's Office, Finance & Administration, Human Resources, Information Technology). "Hybrid" includes departments that have a mix of field-based and office-based employees or have a significant number of employees that have sustained face-to-face interaction with the public (Municipal Court, Parks & Community Services, Planning & Building, Public Works).

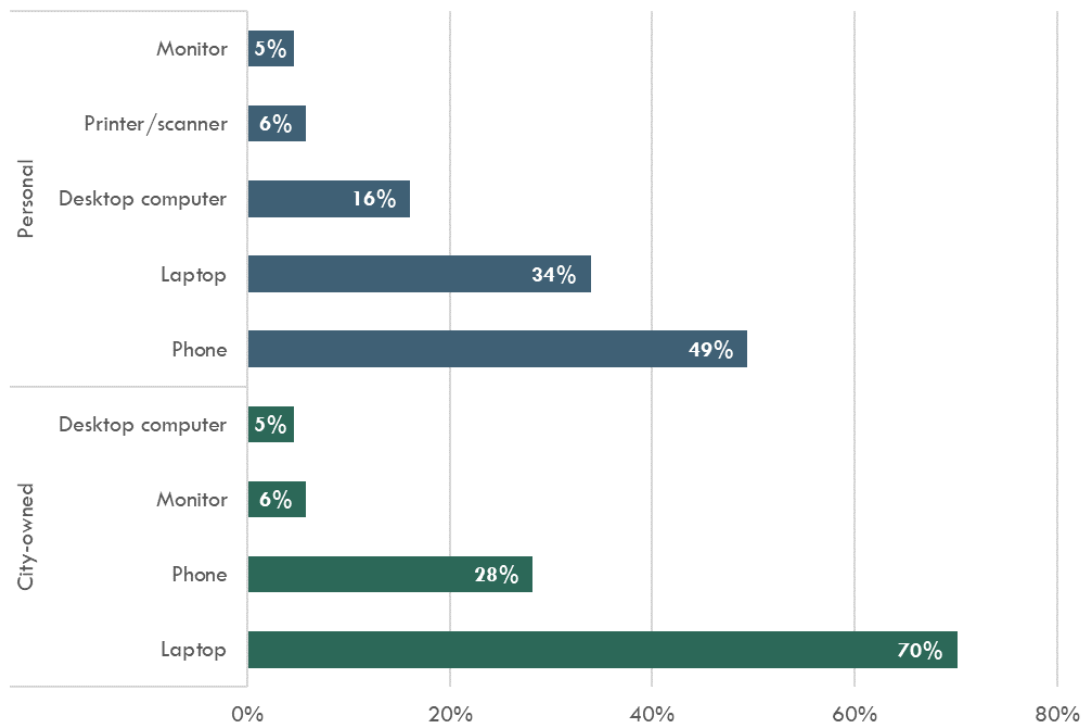*Sources: City of Kirkland, 2020; BERK, 2020.*

Technology, including both software and hardware, was a make-or-break productivity issue for many employees. Employees who had strong internet service, reliable access to the City's remote desktop connection or VPN, and a hardware setup that approximated their in-office set-up reported positive effects on productivity. Several employees noted that having a City-issued laptop allowed them to easily connect to the remote desktop, with positive impacts on their productivity.

However, a number of employees had challenges with unreliable internet speeds, connectivity or access issues with the City VPN and remote desktop, lack of access to necessary City or Department computer applications, and reduced productivity due to using a laptop or single monitor screen (as opposed to the dual monitor set-up available in the office).

Technology

Among employees who worked remotely at any point, a majority (70%) used a City-owned laptop. A significant number reported using a personal phone (49%) or a personal computer (46%) for work at some point while working remotely (Exhibit 8).

Exhibit 8. Percentage of Employees Who Reported Using Categories of Hardware, March-May 2020

Sources: City of Kirkland, 2020; BERK, 2020.

As noted in the Productivity section, several employees reported that using City-issued hardware, including laptops and monitors, contributed positively to their productivity while working from home. This was due to the ease of connecting to the remote desktop on City laptops and the increased screen space available when using a monitor or dual monitors (as opposed to a laptop screen).

A high percentage of employees reported using a personal phone for work (49%). Several survey respondents and interviewees expressed challenges related to answering public-facing phone numbers remotely. Not having a system to answer calls and make calls using a number other than the employee's personal phone number raised privacy concerns, highlighting the potential need for a computer-based phone system.

Among four identified City response areas (technology, communications, pay and benefits, clarity of expectations), respondents rated the City's technology response the lowest of the four, on average. However, the rating was still relatively strong—the average technology response score was 4.1 out of 5 (Exhibit 10).

Areas of improvement identified by staff included:

- The need for a **phone system** that allows employees to make and receive calls from City phone numbers **without having to use their personal phones**. Multiple employees cited challenges with the phone forwarding system and concerns about using their personal phone number to contact members of the public.

- The need for a **Citywide communications platform** that provides **reliable information**

about **staff availability.** While staff appreciated the rollout of Skype and Zoom as communication tools, several employees expressed that Skype did not consistently provide accurate information about colleagues' availability for a phone call or chart in real time, and that many employees did not have Skype set up at the beginning of the pandemic, both of which limited its usefulness.

Communication and Collaboration

Staff reported a high level of engagement with the communications from City and department leaders about the impacts of the pandemic on their role. The highest levels of engagement were reported with the City Manager's direct communications—86% of respondents reported reading or listening to communications from the City Manager. The lowest levels of engagement (though still high overall) were reported with department directors' communications—78% of respondents read or listened to communications from their department director (Exhibit 9).

While communication from City leaders received high marks generally, City staff rated the communications from their direct supervisors the most helpful. While still receiving overall high marks, department directors' communications were rated the lowest between the City Manager, department directors, and direct supervisors (Exhibit 9).

This echoes some concerns raised in interviews about inconsistent communication from department directors to line employees across departments. When cross-tabulating results from director interviews with the employee survey, we found that department directors who reported increasing the frequency of department-wide meetings, sending frequent (even daily) email updates to staff, and making themselves personally available to staff for conversations and questions were rated above-average by their department employees in terms of the helpfulness of their communications.

Exhibit 9. Assessment of Communications from Supervisors, Directors, and the City Manager

Role	Received communication from this individual	Average helpfulness rating (out of 5)
The City Manager	81%	4.12
Your Department Director	77%	4.00
Your Supervisor	81%	4.25

Note: *"Received communication" refers to the employee having "**received** communication (e.g., emails, memos, phone calls) from this person about changes/impacts to [their] role due to the pandemic." The helpfulness rating is the employee's assessment of "the helpfulness of the communication [they] received from the following individuals about change/impacts to [their] role."*

Sources: City of Kirkland, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Nearly half of respondents (46%) gave the City's facilitation of their ability to coordinate and communicate with their direct team the maximum possible rating (5 out of 5). The average rating for this response area was 4.3 (Exhibit 10).

Areas of improvement identified by staff included:

- The need for a **centralized location** where all **communications** from City leaders and managers were stored in a **written format** and **consistently updated** as policies and directives changed. Several employees stated that keeping track of policy changes and the frequent emails from City and department leaders was a challenge.

- The need for a **common understanding** of how leadership decisions would be **communicated to staff** among **department directors**. Several employees stated that they received excellent communication from their own department director but heard from colleagues in other departments that received very little communication from their director. Other employees reported receiving less information or different information from their director than employees in other departments.

Employee Health, Wellness, Pay, and Benefits

While none of the survey questions explicitly referenced physical and mental health, a number of employees provided comments and feedback related to these issues. Areas of concern identified by staff included:

- **Employee physical health.** Several employees felt that City Hall was not closed quickly enough at the start of the pandemic, potentially putting employees at risk of contracting COVID-19. Some employees also cited (stated and unstated) pressure from managers to work in the office even when work from home was allowed.

- **Employee mental, emotional, and social health**. Several employees expressed the desire for leadership, directors, and managers to more directly acknowledge the mental and emotional stresses of the pandemic as the situation stretched into multiple months. Additionally, some employees expressed a desire for opportunities to connect with their colleagues outside of scheduled meetings, approximating interactions that might occur at the water cooler or in the kitchen when working in the office.

On average, employees gave high marks to the City's actions on pay and benefits during the pandemic—the City's response in this area received the highest average rating of four response areas (Exhibit 10). In the interviews, directors and managers confirmed that employees generally had positive reactions to the City's introduction of pandemic leave and its use of administrative leave for public safety employees that are exposed to COVID-19.

Overall Response

Overall, employees gave the City's response to the pandemic high marks (Exhibit 10). Survey respondents appreciated the City's efforts to respond to an unprecedented situation. Specific positive response elements they highlighted included the City's work to avoid furloughs and lay-offs, the provision of pandemic leave, the flexibility given to accommodate employees with caregiving responsibilities, the quick pivot and sustained support of the IT team, and regular communications from the City Manager and DAG.

Exhibit 10. Average Employee Ratings of City's Response, by Response Category (out of 5)
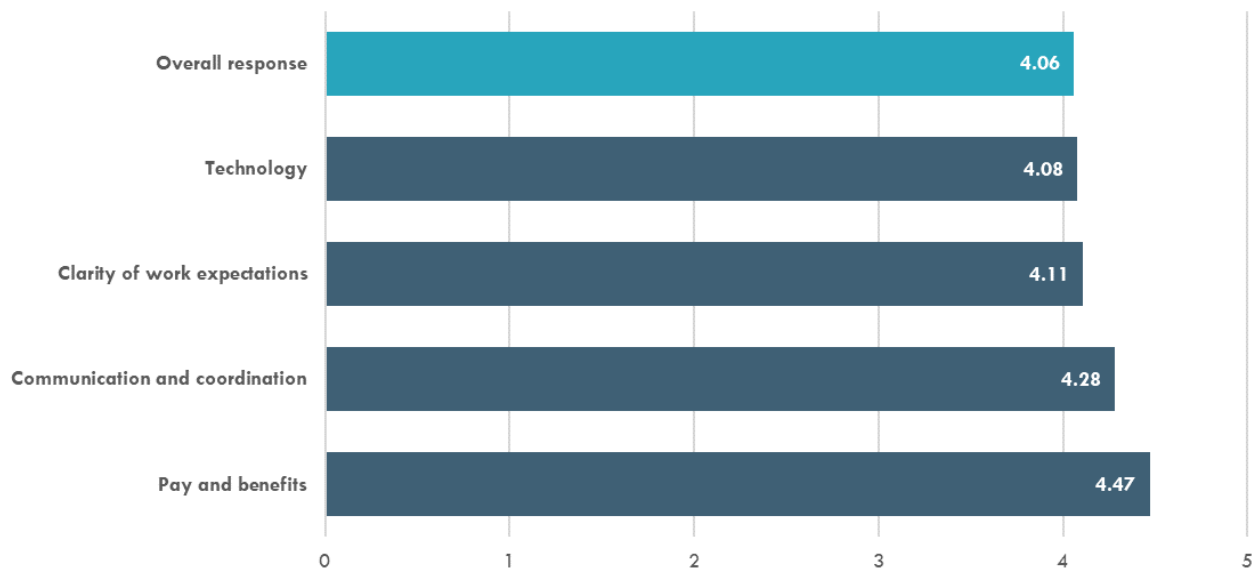
Note: "Technology" was defined as "Technology (e.g., access to video conferencing software, availability of laptops when Remote Work, etc.)." "Clarity of work expectations" was defined as "Clarity of work expectations for you as an employee." "Communication and coordination" was defined as "Ability to communicate/coordinate with your team (your supervisor, peers, etc.)." "Pay and benefits" was defined as "Pay and benefits (e.g., access to paid leave, flexibility in working schedule, etc.)."

Sources: City of Kirkland, 2020; BERK, 2020.

One area of concern that was raised by employees was:

▪ **Uncertainty.** Several employees expressed a desire for longer-term guidance about remote work status. For example, rather than setting potential return-to-the-office dates one to two months out[10] and then revising them, employees expressed a desire for a decision that would set a date several months in the future as a "work remotely until at least _____" point. Employees expressed that such a statement would better allow them to make decisions regarding caregiving for children and older relatives, as well as decisions around purchasing home office items, such as desk chairs and monitors.

Conclusion

Employees rated the City's pandemic response highly overall, with the City's response on pay and benefits, coordination between team members, and IT support receiving particularly high praise. Specific areas for improvement identified include a remote work-friendly phone system, a centralized repository for written City communications, common procedures for disseminating information within departments, and greater recognition of employee physical and mental health concerns.

---

[10] At the time of this report's writing, city leadership has informed staff that there will be changes to schedules with less than 30 days' notice.

APPENDIX 4: EARLY RESPONSE – WHITE PAPER

Kirkland COVID-19 Response as of March 17, 2020

The following is a list of topics and items that the City of Kirkland ("City") has had to consider or address in response to the COVID-19 outbreak starting February 29, 2020. This response is dynamic, complex, and ever changing. We do not represent that this list is complete or that it or the practices it describes will not change. Our response has been based significantly on health care protocols and directives that have themselves changed and evolved in response to the outbreak. This outline is not intended to offer legal or medical advice, and we would refer you to those professionals with any questions you have. For its part, the City has been following direction from relevant health care authorities, including the Seattle-King County Health Department, Washington Department of Health and the federal Center for Disease Control.

Starting February 27th, the Kirkland Fire department identified a trend of increased responses to Life Care Center of Kirkland, a long-term skilled nursing facility, for a flu-like illness. This concern was reported to the local public health.

The Emergency Manager met with the City Manager the afternoon of February 28th to discuss establishing a taskforce to plan for COVID-19 in the community. The first taskforce meeting was planned for March 3rd.

February 28th at 2227 Kirkland Fire and Emergency Management were simultaneously notified of the death of a COVID-19 positive patient at the local hospital, EvergreenHealth. The EOC was opened at 0200 on February 29th to serve as the Command Post for the City's response to COVID-19. The Fire & Police Chief established a Unified Command for the Operations section

The bullet points are provided as topics of consideration. When a bullet starts with "Kirkland" this is specific to actions or decisions the City made.

For specific questions or more information please email your request to EOC@kirkandwa.gov and staff will route or identify answer as able.

Policy Topics

- Definitions: for quarantine/isolation/exposure/"prolonged" contact
    - Needs to be coordinated with local health official
    - Kirkland – followed Public Health - Seattle & King County definitions
- Transport criteria (fever degree, cough, shortness of breath)
    - Needs to be coordinated with local health official, local hospital, and EMS oversight
    - Kirkland – Criteria was established by Public Health Seattle & King County and implemented by local dispatch center
- Return to work protocol
    - For quarantine due to exposure, symptomatic with negative COVID-19 test, symptomatic with positive COVID-19 test
    - For a variety of staff

- Healthcare providers

- First Responders

- Government roles not linked to patient care

- General businesses

  - Coordinate with medical professionals or follow CDC or other official source for guidance

  - Kirkland – worked with Public Health - Seattle & King County for direction

- Information management and security protocol (i.e., HIPPA)

  - Additional staff will be needed to manage large scale tracking of quarantine and isolation – train surge staff in HIPPA as required before it is needed.

- Housing for quarantine/isolation

  - Quarantine

    - Separate areas but can be in same space if social distancing 6 feet

    - Can have common area for meal prep and socializing with social distancing

    - Kirkland – used stand-alone building that had empty office space and break room converted into bedrooms and kitchen, also had shower.

    - Kirkland – had to obtain beds, furniture, fridge, bedding, basic cooking/food prep items, kitchen supplies (dishes, pans, etc.), laptops and monitors for rooms, TV, staples (seasonings, towels, soap, etc.), and exercise equipment

  - Isolation

    - Separate areas all the time, should not be interacting

    - Need schedule for meal prep with time between use for cleaning and airing out

    - Kirkland – used fire station, symptomatic staff were already there, so site was "dirty" and contained all the necessary items

    - Kirkland – still had to support individual needs (meal requirements, hygiene needs, etc.)

  - Need to coordinate facility use with jurisdictions outside of Kirkland

    - Law Enforcement, Fire/EMS, legal, City leaders

    - They may or may not want the site in their jurisdiction

      - Could add call volume or risk to staff or concerns from neighbors to the site

      - But possibility that the other jurisdiction might also be able to use

    - Need to plan for medical or fire response in a COVID-19 positive facility or quarantine or isolation site.

- Coordination with partners about who reports what
  - Consider reporting of exposures, positive cases, deaths, facilities with positive cases
    - Encourage finding ways to limit the "numbers game" as it gets complicated fast, may not be accurate at any given moment, and leaves room for the perception that something is being hidden
  - Kirkland - Reported confirmed cases, deaths, and facilities (number only not names) as provided by Public Health Seattle & King County
- Establish a process for end of life situations
  - Including who conducts death report
    - Depends on local laws
    - If law enforcement does the report, it could add to exposures
    - Kirkland – Police in full PPE for death investigations in known COVID 19 facility and use of PPE if suspected COVID 19 situations
    - Consider reducing the number of Officers who enter the hot zone for the death investigation to conserve PPE
  - Post-mortem testing
    - Determine who obtains a sample and how test is processed
      - Post-mortem may require sample tissue sent to CDC
      - Not a Kirkland responsibility
  - Engage in conversation with coroner or medical examiner in advance
  - Prepare a mass fatality plan, as numbers can add up quickly
- Identification of facilities/locations with COVID-19 at risk populations –
  - Map all risk locations
    - Skilled/long-term nursing facilities
    - Shelters
    - Group homes
    - Specialty centers – Psychiatric centers, dialysis centers, etc.,
  - Demographics – number of residents/clients, type of needs/limits
  - Communications considerations
    - Language(s) spoken
    - Method of information intake (social media vs print vs television vs face to face)
  - Kirkland – City GIS team used open source data to identify facilities in Kirkland to monitor for public health reports or increased call trends

- Continuity of operations plans that include health incident strategies

  - Identify essential services and key staff to sustain services

  - Ability to support a "virtual city hall" to provide essential services to community as best as possible in changing environment

  - Plans to implement NPI – Social distancing, hand washing, no handshaking, limiting transfer of papers/money by hand, cleaning practices.

  - Consider all sites not just City Hall (police department lobby, jail, courts, libraries, after school programs, parks, outdoor restrooms, etc.)

  - Kirkland – had a robust COOP/COG plan, added "health incident" appendix February 4th. This appendix was provided to departments on Feb 11th, with instructions to initiate planning for how to implement hygiene and social distancing strategies in their daily operations, just in case

- Work with health officials to clarify/determine who will be tested for what and when

  - Symptomatic, asymptomatic, exposed, close contact, in general, etc.

  - Clarify where, when, and how testing will occur

  - Establish a process for reporting test results

- Ride-along Status

  - Media wants to ride with responders

  - Kirkland – all ride-along opportunities were suspended for Fire and Police

- Jail programs

  - All programs were suspended

  - Increased screening prior to allowing entrance into the facility

  - Inmates medically screened every day instead of just at intake

- Photo policy

  - Media requested to photograph personnel in quarantine and isolation

  - Kirkland – denied all media requests for photos of personnel at sites, maintained existing department photography policies for personnel

- Labor unions should be engaged early – pre-incident if possible

  - Review collective bargaining agreements to understand overtime, leave time, donation of leave policies, alternative work schedules, tasks and potential impacts

  - Not just for first responders but all represented staff

- Confirm or determine with Labor and Industries what classification time spent in quarantine or isolation.

- "Pandemic leave," sick leave, administrative leave, shared leave banks, L&I claims, etc.
- Equipment sharing
  - Have loan policies and procedures established
  - This could be first response equipment, response units, stations
  - Could be between departments or with external partners
- Confirm telecommute policies are established
  - Verify technology and training is in place to support actions
  - Work from home agreements
  - Understand what activities can and cannot be done virtual – example Concealed Pistol Licenses "shall" be processed in 30 days. Applications can be processed electronically but all persons still must be fingerprinted.
  - Kirkland – COOP plan established telework capability and policy, implemented based on City Manager direction in connection with manager for special situations

Responder/Healthcare Workers

- Identify a method for staffing to maintain response capability during absenteeism
  - Consider overtime, mutual aid, call back, regional/state resources
  - Monitor for fatigue, burnout, decline in general health of those on overtime
  - Kirkland – was able to sustain service level through minimum staffing filled by Kirkland Firefighters on overtime.
- Wear appropriate PPE on COVID-19 possible response calls (mask, gloves, gowns, goggles for all), and include for all potential personnel involved (including Chaplain and law enforcement)
- Screen all non-emergency 9-1-1 calls and indicate on dispatch calls what type of PPE is required based on nature of call
- Modify information/records management to document PPE needed and worn on calls
- Determine method to track first responders, healthcare workers (nurses, aids, therapists) that may respond to or travel and work at multiple facilities
- Use compression only or alternative devices for CPR in high risk or COVID suspected situations
  - In coordination with local health officials/EMS oversight
- Limit exposure
  - Limit the number of responders who enter a location
  - Kirkland - Recommend patient come outside rather than responders enter – if able – this

includes at care facilities

- □ Kirkland – If not an immediate life-threatening situation (CPR call) have one responder use full PPE and make patient contact to triage the situation, then advise rest of crew of recommended PPE level

- Fit-test N95 masks before needed

  - □ Include Law Enforcement, the Jail, Chaplin, and others field responders

- Change HEPA filters on respiratory therapy equipment

  - □ Kirkland – switched to HEPA filter on bag valve mask

- Add donning/doffing PPE details to safety guidance

  - □ Particularly if non-first responders begin using gloves as proactive measure when handling cash or documents (permits, license, passports, etc.)

  - □ Kirkland – provided non-medical grade disposable gloves (food handling gloves) to front counter staff who accept payments or documents from public. EMS Captain provided donning and doffing training.

  - □ Kirkland – provided surgical masks to the Jail to be worn by symptomatic inmates.

- Establish a recall process for first responders off site who need to comply with exposure actions

  - □ Consider staff that live out of area or may be on vacation

  - □ Specific requirements by the local health official may need to be met

    - To fly or not to fly

    - Rental vehicle requirements for decontamination

      - □ Leather, large space, air conditioning

      - □ Rental agency understanding and acceptance of use

Communications

- Communicate information, changes, updates in the following order

  - □ Impacted population first (first responders, COVID site)

  - □ Family of impacted population

  - □ Community of impact (could be jurisdiction or agency staff, or local community)

  - □ Public and media in general

- Establish roles of Incident/Lead PIO and Jurisdiction Communications Manager

  - □ Lead PIO speaks to incident information

  - □ Jurisdiction works with elected leaders, City voice

- - Kirkland – Lead PIO was Public Health – Seattle & King County, City PIO was City Communications Manager

- Consistent daily communications

  - With individuals in quarantine or isolation

    - Kirkland - Used auto-dialer script for patient outreach

    - Kirkland - Headsets on phones expedited process (type while talk)

  - Leadership needs to speak - particularly to impacted responders and jurisdictional community and organizations

    - Need guidance on crisis vs outrage communications

    - Need to stay in lane, defer to those with expertise while keeping public generally up to date

    - Kirkland – coordinated through the Joint Information Center (JIC)

  - Used a technology resource to expedite connection with patients being monitored in quarantine/isolation

    - Kirkland - Modified the ArcGIS system the city uses as it provides secured communications. Significantly streamlined patient outreach.

- Identify a single source for technical/health information (public health website)

  - Kirkland – Linked all City sites to Public Health – Seattle & King County

EOC/Command Staffing

- Establish specialized teams to manage areas of operations

  - Kirkland- established

  - Medical monitoring group - tracked symptoms and status of first responders in quarantine and isolation

  - Health services group - partnered with local health department to coordinate and track surveillance of situation, EMS protocols, and standards of care

- Identify specialized training and succession planning for specialized teams – this is a marathon not a sprint

- EOC staff should be familiar with responder procedures and policies to facilitate support

  - Kirkland – each EOC section chief briefed staff on basics of incident, responder practices, and long-term vision.

- Start staff planning early – need consistent mechanism to elicit availability and schedule staff – account for absenteeism (sick, sick family, school closures, fear)

  - Kirkland – leveraged human resources to work with Directors to obtain availability and staff positions

- Kirkland – had been training and exercising approximately 120 employees to work in the EOC over the past 2 years, this allowed for adequate sustained staffing

Resources/Supplies

- Identify/stock up on key resources early

  - PPE – multiple levels, cleaning/sanitizer for facilities/units, hand wipes or Purell for all staff

  - Inventory now consider contracting or procuring if you can find items

    - Report price gouging to appropriate legal point

  - Kirkland – February 29th contacted all supplies (after hours) to procure items, including picking up and loading from warehouse that night. Got in que for reorders

- Consider assigning/adding designated transport vehicle for COVID-19 patients to minimize exposures and the need for decontamination of multiple units

  - Includes establishing decontamination procedures

  - Leverage or obtain equipment to assist in rapid decontamination

  - Kirkland – Staffed additional aid car designated for COVID-19

  - Kirkland – Obtained electrostatic decontamination sprayers to facilitate limited out of service time between high risk responses for use by fire, police and jail vehicles

- Identify designated spaces for confidential conversations and secure information storage

  - This may be beyond normal EOC storage – need to comply with HIPPA

  - Kirkland – converted Radio room and Call Center into HIPPA compliant rooms

- More people working 24/7 means more janitorial/waste management needs

  - This includes EOC, fire stations, police department, jail, quarantine and isolation sites

  - Kirkland - Amount, frequency, and type of cleaning had to be increased

- Meals for variety of locations needed consideration

  - Catering (limit potential for exposure, need for box lunches vs. buffet)

  - Quarantine and Isolation sites – specific needs/orders for food

  - Dietary considerations

    - Keto, gluten free, vegan, diabetic, etc.

- Donations

  - Decide early if and what will be accepted and how it will be managed

  - Financial, supplies, food, etc., - if they can give it they will offer!

  - Kirkland – Referred financial donations to local charities supporting COVID 19 (Hospital,

fire, police)

- ▫ Kirkland – Did not accept food unless provided by actual restaurant and then had them deliver to fire and police stations for on duty crews

- ▫ Kirkland – Used social media to inform and direct people on appropriate actions

- ▪ Research and identify list of vendors for unique/uncommon items for COVID-19

  - ▫ Not all vendors will rent/loan for COVID-19 needs

  - ▫ Supplies, housing, cleaning contractors, food service, etc.

- ▪ Have IT readily available for support

  - ▫ In EOC

  - ▫ To build capability on the fly

- ▪ Stock thermometers, personal hygiene kits, materials to maintain privacy

- ▪ Consider loaner laptops for quarantine and isolation sites

  - ▫ Including larger monitors for isolation when they are spending most of the time in own space

  - ▫ Kirkland- IT repurposed surplus units for sites to provide each person with resources

Reporting

- ▪ Early and thorough documentation

  - ▫ Consider setting specific "run code" for COVID-19 that is consistent from dispatch to end of call

  - ▫ Document PPE used on all calls consistently

- ▪ SurveyMonkey may have HIPAA-compliant option to assist with tracking

APPENDIX 5: SAMPLE CITY MANAGER GLOBAL MESSAGES

Email #1 – COVID-19 Initial Email

From: Kurt Triplett <KTriplett@kirklandwa.gov> on behalf of Kurt Triplett
Sent on: Saturday, February 29, 2020 7:09:33 AM
To: All <All@kirklandwa.gov>
Subject: COVID 19 Corona Virus - Practical preparations
Urgent: High

Dear Kirkland Employees – As most of you know, earlier this week, the federal Centers for Disease Control (CDC) placed the nation on alert that we should prepare for the potential spread of the COVID 19 Coronavirus in the United States. Since that time, Fire Chief Joe Sanford, Emergency Manager Heather Kelly and I have been in close communication on what additional actions the City of Kirkland should take. Our protocols are to follow the guidance of the State Department of Health and the King County Department of Public Health for action steps. Heather Kelly has spent the last few days in trainings and discussions about how to prepare the Kirkland organization for the spread of the virus.

COVID-19 is an active situation that is changing daily. The City OEM is proactively monitoring public health information for any potential implications for staff and the local community. In the meantime, here are steps staff can take proactively.

Prevention of the spread of any virus is key to minimizing personal and professional impacts. Some actions you can take now to help reduce the risk of infection include:
1) If sick (fever/cough) STAY HOME.
2) Cover your sneeze or cough with a tissue or your arm.
3) Wash your hands or use alcohol-based sanitizer often throughout the day.
4) Get in the habit of NOT touching your face so often.
5) Clean your work area at least once, ideally twice a day. Don't forget phones, keyboards, and door handles.
6) Forgo the handshake for a wave or "elbow bump".
7) Eat healthy, stay hydrated, and get plenty of rest.

To prepared for a pandemic at home staff should consider:
1) Having plans to care for family members when schools, daycares, or senior centers are closed. It is encouraged to have a plan and a backup plan.
2) Having enough non-perishable food at home so trips to the grocery store can be limited or avoided for at least 3 – 4 weeks.
3) Cleaning your living area more often, including wiping down small electronics, door handles, and other items commonly touched by many people.

To prepare for a pandemic at work staff should:
1) Communicate with their manager about their specific situation related to caring for family members, Remote Work, or altered work schedules.
2) Engage in cross training or document your work processes so others could fill in if needed.
3) Consider phone calls over face to face conversations.
4) Make sure work files are on a shared access location so others can access them if you are

gone.

For accurate official information and guidance related to the status of COVID-19 it is recommended to look to the CDC and Public Health Seattle-King County websites.

CDC's 2019 Novel Coronavirus website

Public Health Seattle-King County Novel Coronavirus website

OEM and the City Manager's office will start providing periodic updates and action steps related to COVID 19 next week. A task force of Directors working with OEM will develop specific recommendations and actions based on our current Continuity of Government and Continuity of Operations (COG and COOP) plans.

If you have any questions, please don't "Reply All" but send them to me and Heather Kelly.

In the meantime, take practical steps to help yourself and your family stay healthy.

Kurt

NOTICE: This e-mail account is part of the public domain. Any correspondence and attachments, including personal information, sent to and from the City of Kirkland are subject to the Washington State Public Records Act, Chapter 42.56 RCW, and may be subject to disclosure to a third party requestor, regardless of any claim of confidentiality or privilege asserted by an external party.

Email #2 Stay Home, Stay Safe

From: Kurt Triplett <KTriplett@kirklandwa.gov> on behalf of Kurt Triplett

Sent on: Tuesday, March 24, 2020 6:25:33 AM

To: All <All@kirklandwa.gov>

Subject: Governor "Stay Home, Stay Healthy" order

Attachments: FINAL-WA-Essential-Critical-Infrastructure.pdf (175.58 KB)

Dear Kirkland Employees - Tonight, Gov. Jay Inslee signed a statewide proclamation for a two week **STAY-AT-HOME** order in Washington State, similar to orders you have seen in states like California, and New York also combatting this virus. Here is a link to the Governor's announcement:

https://www.governor.wa.gov/news-media/inslee-announces-stay-home-stay-healthy%C2%A0order

Below is a summary provided by the Governor's office: **(Please look to the bottom of the email for information on how Kirkland employees should respond tomorrow.)**

- *The order* requires every Washingtonian to stay at home unless they are pursuing an essential activity, like shopping for groceries, going to a doctor's appointment, or going to work at an essential business.
- *The order* bans ALL gatherings of people for social, spiritual and recreational purposes. This applies to BOTH private and public gatherings. This applies to every type of gathering, including some of the most deeply meaningful gatherings in our communities, like weddings and funerals. These celebrations of life, these important moments to gather with loved ones, must be postponed.
- *The order will* close all businesses except essential businesses.
- **The definition of essential critical infrastructure sectors and workers is attached to this email as a pdf. Directors will be evaluating this document for its impact on Kirkland tomorrow at 9AM.**
- **The order on gatherings and going out will take effect immediately.**
- **Closings on businesses will happen 48 hours after signing the order.**
- This is not strictly a "shelter in place." The order still allows residents to go outside using social distancing, and to visit the grocery stores and other essential businesses that remain open.
- Life will go on, but with this in mind: **Stay Home, Stay Healthy.**
- This order builds upon the early and unprecedented steps we took to protect

Washingtonians, including the closure of schools, restaurants, entertainment venues and other businesses where people congregate. We have been thoughtful and deliberate in making these tough choices.

- The governor has been very clear on the need for Washingtonians to stay home, and while most Washingtonians are doing their part, some are still not grasping the seriousness of this pandemic.
- People will need to stay home unless absolutely necessary. This means we will be banning all gatherings.
- We need to close non-essential businesses with in-office personnel functions and other public places, with the intention to reduce social interactions where this highly contagious virus can spread.
- We know many businesses can continue to operate using telework and that can and should continue.
- For businesses where individuals cannot work from home, the governor's office will provide guidance on what businesses are essential, building on the federal government's and California's definition of Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers.
- All grocery stores, pharmacies, gas stations, food supply chains, and other thing necessary for continued operations will remain open. We expect businesses and residents to voluntarily comply, but we will be discussing in the coming days any enforcement mechanisms if residents and businesses are not complying.
- If the function of your business is not listed but a business believes that it is essential or it is an entity providing essential services or functions, they will be able to request designation as an essential business. Businesses and entities that provide other essential services must implement rules that help facilitate social distancing of at least six feet.
- Please note: the governor's office and the Emergency Operations Center would greatly appreciate the help of our partners and leaders to spread the word that people must avoid the impulse to overstock – if everyone sticks to their normal buying habits, we'll have enough to make sure everyone – including our health care workers, seniors and other people who are ill – have the supplies and items they need.

What does this mean for Kirkland Employees tomorrow (Tuesday)?

Kirkland Directors and I will be meeting at 9AM tomorrow to evaluate the order and any changes it may make for Kirkland operations. More information will be sent out after the meeting. However, the Directors planned for this potential action during our meetings on Friday and this afternoon (Monday). We have

nearly completed designating all essential employees who can continue to come to work even with the order. We will finalize that work tomorrow morning.

All Kirkland Facilities are complying with Public Health guidelines which are also required by the Governor's order. This means we send sick or symptomatic employees home, operate with social distancing and follow all hygienic rules. So essential employees may come to work. Until we complete our essential employees designations, here is our guidance for tomorrow (Tuesday):

- If you were working from home Tuesday, continue to do so.
- If you were going to come in to work Tuesday, but have an approved work from home agreement with your supervisor, you may work from home Tuesday.
- If you are waiting for technology to allow you to work from home, IT hopes to complete all work from home technology set-ups by the end of the day Tuesday, or Wednesday. In the meantime, come in to work Tuesday.
- If you were going to come in to work Tuesday, and do not have a job that can be adapted to work at home (Police, Fire, many jobs in Public Works, Parks and so on), you should still come to work Tuesday.
- If you are not sure what to do, contact your supervisor or your Director Tuesday morning so they can help you.
- Guidance on what to do on Wednesday and for the rest of the week will come out Tuesday afternoon.

Conclusion

Difficult sacrifices are being asked of us. I recognize that COVID-19 has upended our very way of living for the time being. Events that were once unthinkable have happened. Schools and colleges are closed. Businesses are closed. Air travel is shutdown. Sports at every level are shutdown. Our economy is threatened. The person who is not unnerved or apprehensive about these events is not paying attention.

But we will get through this. Step by step. Day by day. Through large and small acts of kindness and caring for each other, for our families and for our world. Our world may be different now, but it will get better again. There is an old saying that "courage is the power to let go of the familiar." Everything about this COVID-19 crisis is unfamiliar to us. But Kirkland employees are talented, dedicated and resilient. For the past three weeks you have demonstrated to the nation that together we have the courage to face this unfamiliar challenge and overcome it.

I wish you and your families good health and happiness,

Kurt

APPENDIX 6: PUBLIC INFORMATION

Exhibit 11. City of Kirkland Flyer Sent to Residential Households

City Manager's Office
City of Kirkland
123 5th Ave
Kirkland, WA 98033

Please read:
Important information from the City of Kirkland about ways you can get help during COVID-19.

Por favor, lea:
Información importante de la Ciudad de Kirkland sobre cómo obtener ayuda durante el COVID-19.

敬请阅读：
柯克兰市关于 COVID-19 疫情期间获取所需协助之法的重要信息。

Ознакомьтесь
Важная информация от города Киркленда о том, как получить помощь во время пандемии COVID-19.

From the Kirkland City Council: The City wants to connect you with needed services during this challenging time of COVID-19. Please try to stay healthy by washing your hands frequently and staying away from groups of people. If you need help or have questions about what to do, please use the phone numbers on this card.

Del Consejo Municipal de Kirkland: La Ciudad quiere conectarlo con los servicios necesarios en este difícil momento durante el COVID-19. Intente cuidar su salud lavándose las manos con frecuencia y evitando los grupos de personas. Si necesita ayuda o tiene preguntas sobre qué hacer, llame a los números de teléfono en esta tarjeta.

柯克兰市议会发布：本市希望协助您在 COVID-19 疫情期间顺利获得所需服务。为确保健康，请务必勤洗手，并远离人群。如需帮助或对相关措施存有疑问，请致电此卡所列的电话号码。

Объявление от Кирклендского городского совета
Власти города стремятся наладить коммуникацию между вами и поставщиками необходимых услуг во время пандемии COVID-19. Чтобы оставаться здоровыми, часто мойте руки и не приближайтесь к скоплениям людей. Если вам требуется помощь или у вас возникли вопросы касательно дальнейших действий, позвоните по номерам телефонов, указанным в этой карте.

Do you have questions about COVID-19?
¿Tiene preguntas sobre el COVID-19?
您是否对 COVID-19 存有疑问？
У вас возникли вопросы о COVID-19?
800-525-0127

Are you in mental or emotional distress?
¿Está angustiado o tiene algún problema físico?
您是否受到精神或情绪困扰？
Вы испытываете душевное или эмоциональное потрясение?
866-427-4747

Are you unable to get food?
¿No puede obtener comida?
您是否无法获得食物？
Вам не удается получить продукты питания?
425-207-4777

More information:
www.kirklandwa.gov/ResidentSupportCOVID

Note: This flyer was sent to all residential households in the City of Kirkland.

Source: City of Kirkland, 2020.

APPENDIX 7: ACRONYMS AND TERMS

AAR	After Action Report
COOP	Continuity of Operations
CDC	Centers for Disease Control
CEM	Certified Emergency Manager
CM	City Manager
CMO	City Manager's Office
COG	Continuity of Government
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DOH	Department of Health (Washington State)
EHA	Eric Holdeman & Associates
EMS	Emergency Medical Services
EOC	Emergency Operations Center
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
HAZMAT	Hazardous Material
HHS	Department of Health & Human Services (U.S.)
HR	Human Resources
HSEEP	Homeland Security Exercise & Evaluation Program
ICS	Incident Command Systems
IP	Improvement Plan
IT	Information Technology
JIC	Joint Information Center
JIS	Joint Information System
KFD	Kirkland Fire Department
KPD	Kirkland Police Department
LWSD	Lake Washington School District
LWIT	Lake Washington Institute of Technology
OEM	Office of Emergency Management
PHSKC	Public Health – Seattle & King County
PIO	Public Information Officer
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
PW	Public Works
VPN	Virtual Private Network