



Communications Department

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 6, 2020

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Mayor: Don't let guard down against COVID-19

State Health Director Dr. Nathaniel Smith identified Jonesboro as a city with some of Arkansas' top COVID-19 case growth Wednesday during Gov. Asa Hutchinson's daily news conference.

Mayor Harold Perrin, meanwhile, has been working since Sunday with Wal-Mart executives to open drive-thru testing for potential coronavirus cases at one of Jonesboro's store parking lots.

Perrin was neither surprised nor alarmed by Smith's statement, but doesn't consider Jonesboro a "hotspot" for coronavirus.

"We have believed for two months that the numbers are higher than announced in Jonesboro, simply because we haven't had the tests run," Perrin said. "I don't know that we're necessarily a hotspot, but I do know COVID-19 hasn't gone anywhere. And just because the governor has loosened restrictions doesn't mean we don't have to be careful.

"We in fact should be more cautious in public because more people will be out and about."

Perrin said he is optimistic that residents will respond well to the easing of restrictions by the state, based on the city's ability to prevent a mass outbreak of COVID-19 in the wake of the March 28 tornado.

"I had a lot of concern after that tornado that COVID might run rampant through our city, through our police force or fire department," Perrin said. "As you know, this coronavirus can lie dormant for weeks before symptoms begin to show.

"I consider it a great response by our city that even though our numbers continue to grow, we didn't see a large spike after the tornado. I do believe, however, that we have not had accurate totals because of the lack of tests."

Perrin said he hopes that a partnership with Wal-Mart will lead to more testing and accurate numbers.

“I want us to proceed,” he said of the easing of public restrictions. “But with caution. That means yes, you should wear a mask in public. And yes, you should stay home if you have a fever or other signs of illness. And yes, you should maintain social distance at all times.”

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