

Live coronavirus updates for Thursday, April 30 Another death raises Utah's toll to 46; Summit County to lift stay-at-home order

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Body

Editor's note The Salt Lake Tribune is providing free access to critical stories about the coronavirus. Sign up for our Top Stories newsletter, sent to your inbox every weekday morning. To support journalism like this, please donate or become a subscriber.

It's Thursday, April 30. We'll provide the latest coronavirus updates involving Utah throughout the day.

[Read complete coronavirus coverage here.]

830 p.m.: Prominent Salt Lake City booksellers criticize plans to reopen businesses Friday

The owners of three prominent Salt Lake City bookstores are slamming Gov. Gary Herbert, calling the state's plan to reopen Utah businesses as the coronavirus pandemic continues "magical thinking at best."

In an open letter to Herbert, along with Salt Lake City Mayor Erin Mendenhall and Salt Lake County Mayor Jenny Wilson, the booksellers argue that "much as we would love to throw open our doors to the public for business as usual on May 1st, we believe we would risk our lives along with those of our employees by doing so."

The letter, emailed to the stores' patrons Thursday, is signed by Ken Sanders, owner of Ken Sanders Rare Books; Betsy Burton and Anne Holman, from The King's English; and Catherine and Tony Weller, proprietors of Weller Book Works. (The full text of the "manifesto" can be read on The King's English's Facebook page.)

Herbert announced Wednesday that a gradual reopening of Utah businesses will begin on Friday, following the state's Utah Leads Together 2.0 plan. "This is not going back to business as usual. We are not at that point yet," Herbert said Wednesday, at the state's daily media briefing.

The booksellers write that "we have taken every step we conceivably could to keep our customers in books yet out of harm's way." They list such services as curbside pick-up, local delivery and virtual story hours.

Even so, they write, "our businesses are suffering, our sales are disappearing, and our very futures are at stake."

But when "even reliable access to necessary cleaning and disinfecting supplies is still out of reach" for small businesses, the owners say they fear more the damage to their businesses if even one employee or one customer became infected with the coronavirus.

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"As responsible employers we resist the idea of putting our booksellers (or our customers) at risk, however much we long for the return to a normal world," the booksellers write

— Sean P. Means

550 p.m.: Salt Lake County mayor signs "phased reopening" order

Salt Lake County Mayor Jenny Wilson and Salt Lake County Health Department Executive Director Gary Edwards signed a new COVID-19-related health order on Thursday, allowing for a "phased reopening" of previously closed businesses and public services.

While the "Salt Lake County Together" health order was officially signed on Thursday, Wilson and Edwards announced specifics of the plan at a news conference Wednesday. They did offer a few clarifications Thursday, however.

Among them

- While residents are encouraged to continue wearing face coverings and practicing social distancing, personal service customers will not be required to wear face coverings.
- Employees in all businesses, including retail (not just businesses reopening tomorrow), are required to wear a face covering if they interact directly with customers or if they cannot consistently maintain 6 feet of social distance from other employees.
- "No team or group activities," under the auspices of "Gyms & Fitness Centers," also prohibits group classes from such activities as yoga and Cross-Fit.
- Swimming pools are open for lap-swimming only.

— Eric Walden

535 p.m.: Bryce Canyon to reopen on limited basis

Bryce Canyon is to be the first national park in Utah to welcome back visitors on May 6 after a being fully closed for a few weeks in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

Next week, the park will begin increasing recreational access and services with limited options.

The park will not collect fees when it lifts the gate. Visitors will be confined to the main road and the Bryce Amphitheater trails. All the pullouts and the Rainbow Point overlook will be open. The only restrooms open will be those at Sunset Point.

"We shy away from saying 'reopening' because people won't be able to experience the parks the way they have in the past," said National Park Service spokeswoman Vanessa Lacayo. "For the staff and the visitors that are coming, there is still an inherent risk of coronavirus that we have to manage for."

Remaining closed will be the visitor center, campgrounds, Mossy Cave parking and trailhead, backcountry trails, including the popular Under the Rim Trail and campsites, and park concessions facilities, such as the historic lodge and pizzeria.

— Brian Maffly

515 p.m.: Summit County to lift "Stay-at-Home" order, move into "Stabilization Phase"

Summit County officials will lift the current Stay-at-Home order as of 1201 a.m. Friday, May 1, at which time a new "Joint Public Health Order, 2020-05" will go into effect.

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The new health order, which transitions Summit County to the "Stabilization Phase" of its COVID-19 response plan and lowers the current health risk in the county to "Moderate," provides "specific protocols for 32 different local business sectors developed in partnership with business and public representatives, municipalities, and county leadership through an extensive outreach effort."

"Due to the support and cooperation of our communities and the hard work of our healthcare services, we are ready to move to the next phase of our fight against COVID-19," Summit County Health Director Dr. Rich Bullough said in a news release. "The public's sacrifices made all the difference in flattening the curve, allowing us to lift the Stay At Home Order. As surges of the virus occur in surrounding areas, we continue to stress the importance of personal protection and continue to discourage unnecessary travel from outside the area."

The health order, which was approved by Gov. Gary Herbert and the Utah Coronavirus Task Force, provides details on a planned reopening of businesses. Among the conditions of the health order "Public and private gatherings are limited to no more than 20 people, with certain exemptions for emergency response, grocery stores, gas stations and other essential industries. All hot tubs, spas, saunas, steam rooms, locker rooms, bike share, dog parks, and leisure swimming pools will remain closed to members, guests, patrons, and the general public."

The health order is in effect until July 1, but is slated to be reviewed in 14 days, at which point it may be ended, extended, or modified. The Health Department will continue to evaluate epidemiological data, and should spread of the coronavirus in Summit County be found to substantially increase, the Stay-at-Home order may be reinstituted.

The Health Order can be viewed in its entirety at <https://www.summitcounty.org/DocumentCenter/View/10898/Joint-Public-Health-Order-2020-05---Stabilization-Phase-signed>. Questions may also be directed to the Summit County Community Concerns Line at 435-333-0050.

— Eric Walden

432 p.m.: St. George opening several recreational facilities

The city of St. George on Thursday announced plans to open several recreational facilities over the coming days that have been closed due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

All city splash pads will be open as of Friday, May 1; the St. George City Pool is scheduled to reopen on Saturday, May 2; and the St. George Recreation Center is slated to open up again on Monday, May 4.

"Listening to the medical experts has always been and will continue to drive our decision-making methods regarding the city facilities we reopen," said Mayor John Pike. "After consultation with Dr. Blodgett of Southwest Utah Public Health Department and the guidance of our state-level officials, we decided it was appropriate to open these facilities with additional safety measures taken."

Those measures will include altered hours of operation and adjusted capacity limits.

Over the past several weeks, the city has reopened its four golf courses, as well as all city-owned pickleball, tennis and sand volleyball courts.

— Eric Walden

425 p.m.: Relief bill makes \$80 million available to residents, businesses and farmers

Gov. Gary Herbert signed a major COVID-19 relief bill on Thursday, making available a total of \$80 million in help for residents, businesses and farmers.

SB3006 sets up several state agencies to oversee a series of grants out of the money being pumped into Utah's economy under the federal \$2.3 trillion Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act.

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It is the 16th bill the Republican governor has signed from two recent special sessions on Utah's Capitol Hill to address effects of the pandemic.

SB3006 puts \$20 million in CARES Act cash toward grants for the state's farmers and another \$40 million into rental-assistance grants to commercial landlords of small businesses.

In both cases, the cash is meant for those who can demonstrate financial losses stemming not from the virus itself, but instead from recent stay-at-home orders and other social-distancing measures designed to contain it.

The bill also steers up to \$20 million from CARES toward helping state residents harmed by COVID-19 "to find and retain housing," through the state Department of Workforce Services.

The state Department of Agriculture's Conservation Commission will give out the \$20 million in grants of up to \$40,000 to farming operations harmed by outbreak-related health decrees. SB3006 had been originally written to instead loan the cash to farm operators, in amounts of up to \$150,000 repayable over three years.

The Governor's Office of Economic Development will oversee the one-time commercial rent-assistance grants totaling \$40 million. Those grants will be for up to \$10,000 apiece and will go to landlords renting to financially hit businesses with no more than 100 workers.

The commercial-assistance grants are designed to scale in size depending on the tenants' business losses since Feb. 1 and whether they are also getting money through the CARES Act's Paycheck Protection Program.

— Tony Semerad

245 p.m.: Grocery pickup now available at Sprouts stores in Salt Lake County

Sprouts Farmers Market has expanded grocery pickup to 33 locations in five states — including four stores along the Wasatch Front.

The service lets customers plan grocery pickup for the same day or schedule several days in advance, depending on availability, the company said in a news release.

Sprouts has stores in Salt Lake City, Murray, Holladay and South Jordan.

Customers can go to sprouts.com/order to shop. They will receive a notification when the order is ready.

Upon arrival at the store, a Sprouts personal shopper will bring the groceries to the parking spot.

Sprouts also offers grocery delivery to some ZIP codes.

— Zoi Walker

205 p.m.: Herbert says Utah will take steps to ensure coronavirus testing is reliable

Utah Gov. Gary Herbert said the state will ensure its major effort to seek out the coronavirus, called TestUtah.com, is producing reliable results.

Herbert said personnel at the Utah Department of Health and the Department of Public Safety will work with the companies behind TestUtah.com. He noted TestUtah.com has often been giving tests to people with no symptoms. The state epidemiologist has asked for only people with at least one symptom of COVID-19 seek testing.

"That's a concern to reconcile," Herbert said, "so we make sure the results are accurate."

An infectious disease specialist with Intermountain Healthcare had raised concerns about the processes used by TestUtah.com and the reliability of their results.

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A review of data showed TestUtah.com was finding COVID-19 cases at a far lower rate than other testing sources in Utah even among people showing symptoms.

The executives behind TestUtah.com have expressed confidence in the program and said that it is testing from a wider, less-symptomatic pool than hospital-based testing sites.

155 p.m.: Herbert expresses optimism as Utah prepares to lift some coronavirus restrictions

Utah Gov. Gary Herbert on Thursday encouraged residents to remain careful but also said they should be proud of the way they have helped mitigate the spread of the coronavirus.

Herbert wore an orange tie at a Thursday news conference to note Utah's transition out of the most serious pandemic category — red — and into that softer shade.

When the month changes on Friday, many of the Utah businesses that have been closed for the past six weeks or so will be allowed to reopen, albeit with social distancing and hygiene protocols. People can gather in groups of less than 20.

"It symbolizes a number of things," the governor said of the changes. "One is that we're making progress. We're moving forward. There is reason for all of us to be optimistic, hopeful."

Herbert also said the daily briefings he or Dr. Angela Dunn, the state epidemiologist, have provided since the pandemic began will be reduced to three days a week. Herbert said he likely will attend only once a week.

Daily briefings had become a staple for governors and health departments across the country during the national emergency.

— Nate Carlisle

1 p.m. One more Utahn dies of the coronavirus

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Utah has recorded another death from COVID-19 as total cases rose another 4%.

The state's death toll is now 46, according to the Utah Department of Health.

There were 177 new coronavirus cases reported Thursday, bringing Utah's total to 4,672. It represents the largest one-day number leap in new cases since April 5.

In Salt Lake County, the increase was also 4%. The county added 90 coronavirus cases for a total of 2,438. Utah County added 58 cases for a total of 957. That's a jump of about 6.5%.

The death happened in Salt Lake County, according to the data. Further details were not immediately provided.

The new data shows about 2,800 new tests were reported Thursday, boosting that total to 108,501.

There were seven new hospitalizations, giving Utah 390 hospitalizations since the pandemic began.

— Nate Carlisle

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1225 p.m.: Salt Lake City schools reopening May 4? Don't believe it.

Salt Lake City School District is warning parents and students about a fake alert on social media saying classes will resume in person on May 4.

The message looks like a screenshot of the typical "Superintendent's Message" sent out by district Superintendent Lexi Cunningham. "However," the district said, "this message is false."

All public K-12 schools in Utah will remain dismissed through the end of the academic year.

— Courtney Tanner

1155 a.m.: Chinese American Utahns donate protective equipment to U. Health

The Chinese Utahns' Alliance Against COVID-19 donated approximately \$30,000 worth of personal protective equipment to University Utah Health on Thursday — the group's second big donation in two weeks.

The organization of 30,000 Utahns of Chinese descent contributed 5,000 N95 respirator masks, 4,000 medical face masks and 1,000 disposable masks this week.

On April 17, the group donated 2,500 surgical masks and other protective gear to the Salt Lake City Police Department.

"This collective donation effort demonstrates our caring for the community from Chinese Utahns and will support local medical institutions in the war against COVID-19," said Bill Jiang, the group's president. "Utah is the place we all call home. I want to call out to all local residents and like-minded groups to join our collective efforts going forward."

Formed in mid-March, the organization raised more than \$50,000 in three weeks. The group has also donated more than 15,000 surgical masks, 2,000 N95 medical respirators, thousands of exam gloves and 100 protective suits to the Utah COVID-19 Task Force, University of Utah hospitals and clinics, Intermountain Healthcare, St. Mark's Hospital, Bear River Health Department, several police departments, school districts and senior centers and Refugee and Immigration Services.

— Scott D. Pierce

1147 a.m.: Four coronavirus cases but no deaths at state-run care facility

The Utah State Developmental Center in American Fork has had four COVID-19 cases, though three of those people have recovered.

There have been no coronavirus deaths, according to a news release Thursday from the Utah Department of Human Services, which oversees the center. It is a long-term care facility for people with developmental disabilities.

The news release did not specify whether the four cases were residents or staffers. It said three of the infected individuals have since had two negative COVID-19 tests and are considered recovered.

The fourth person is not showing any symptoms, the release said.

The center has limited the spread by restricting visitors, reducing movements within the facility, conducting health screenings for residents and employees, isolating positive cases and having staffers wear personal protective equipment.

— Nate Carlisle

1145 a.m.: Medical workers to get gift cards from Beans & Brews

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Beans & Brews Coffee House will donate \$10,000 in gift cards to Utah health care professionals.

The 1,000 gift cards — worth \$10 each — will be distributed to employees at University of Utah and Intermountain Healthcare clinics throughout the Wasatch Front this week, Jeff Laramie, CEO of Beans & Brews, said in a news release.

“This small gesture is to say thanks to those on the front lines for being ready to meet this challenge. And for taking care of our family and friends in the community that have, or are suffering complications from the coronavirus.”

— Zoi Walker

1110 a.m.: LDS Church cancels treks, youth conferences and summer pageants for 2020

Going on treks, a tradition for young members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, won't happen this summer due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Neither will youth camps — both Aaronic Priesthood quorum camp and Young Women camp — and other overnight conferences, church officials announced Thursday.

Leaders announced Thursday that the church recreational properties in the United States and Canada — places where youth camps and conferences are held — will be closed indefinitely. When leadership approves gatherings again, local leaders may organize youth activities at church meetinghouses.

Local lay leaders are being told not to schedule treks for 2020. Treks are a popular youth event in which supervised teens re-create the experiences of Mormon settlers, pushing handcarts on the trail.

Church leadership suggests local leaders “consider technology-based experiences” as a substitute for camps and conferences “that would provide youth with fun and meaningful opportunities to connect with each other.”

The church has also canceled its two major pageants for 2020. The Nauvoo Pageant, in Illinois, will return for a run July 6-31, 2021, and continue in future years. The Hill Cumorah Pageant, which had been scheduled to end an 83-year run this summer in upstate New York, will see its final season delayed to July 8-10 and 13-17, 2021.

— Sean P. Means

1020 a.m.: Tracy Aviary to reopen Saturday, to a few people at a time

Tracy Aviary and Botanical Garden will reopen Saturday, with limits on how many people can visit at a time.

The aviary's rules, announced Thursday, are similar to those established for Hogle Zoo, which announced Wednesday it would reopen Saturday.

The 8-acre attraction at 589 E. 1300 South, at the southwest corner of Salt Lake City's Liberty Park, will limit admission to about 60 people per hour. The goal will be no more than 120 people on the grounds at any given time.

Tickets will be sold online, at tracyaviary.org, or touch free at the gate.

Everyone entering the aviary must wear a mask or other face covering.

The aviary will post one-way direction signs, and other demarcation signs by exhibits, to encourage people to distance themselves from other groups. Sanitizer stations will be installed throughout the aviary.

Indoor exhibits, the gift shop and regular programming will remain closed for now. The popular bird show is set to restart around Memorial Day, with limited seating in the amphitheater to ensure social distancing.

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General admission hours will be from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., seven days a week. The aviary will be open from 9 to 10 a.m. for people 65 and older, and for people in high-risk groups. The aviary is asking people who have symptoms of COVID-19 or have been in close contact with anyone who has COVID-19 to stay home for now.

— Sean P. Means

1010 a.m.: City Creek Canyon is crowded, so officials urge people to take it easy

As Utahns crowd City Creek Canyon, Salt Lake City officials urge people to be safe and courteous.

"In the past few weeks, with the stay-home directive in place for COVID-19, we have seen very large numbers of people recreating in City Creek Canyon. It's completely understandable, given everyone's need for fresh air and a break from being homebound," Laura Briefer, director of Salt Lake City Department of Public Utilities, said in a statement Thursday.

"But with the increase in visitation of the canyon, it is more important than ever to adhere to established safety protocols when walking, running and cycling the canyon road," she said.

Pedestrians are required to stay on the canyon's stream side, while bicyclists must always stay on the right, traveling on the canyon's stream side heading uphill, and on the slope side traveling downhill.

Leashed dogs are allowed in the lower canyon, but dogs are prohibited beyond picnic site 16, where a sign just below the water treatment plant directs owners and their dogs to turn around.

The speed limit for motorized vehicles is 15 mph.

More information on City Creek and other canyon watershed guidelines and regulations can be found at slc.gov/utilities/watershed.

— Becky Jacobs

930 a.m.: In op-ed, Robert Redford says pandemic can show world how to fight climate change

Many of the lessons of the COVID-19 pandemic — people's resilience, the need for action, and the importance of listening to scientists — can and should be applied to battling climate change, says filmmaker and activist Robert Redford.

In an op-ed published Thursday on NBC News' website, Redford and his son, James, compare what has happened in response to the coronavirus pandemic with what they say needs to happen to stem global climate change.

Not all the lessons have been pleasant, the Redfords write. In both cases, they write, President Donald Trump "failed early on to embrace or even understand sound scientific consensus about what must be done to protect this nation and its people."

However, "at the same time, we've been fortunate to witness the inspiring power of people doing the right thing," they write, citing people's willingness to shelter in place, businesses repurpose their production lines, and companies donating needed health supplies.

"COVID-19 has shown us the power of sound science, true leadership and early action. We must honor this knowledge if we want to avoid what is coming," the Redfords write. "This actionable wisdom should be at the core of our fight against climate change."

In addition to being founder and president of the Utah-based Sundance Institute, Robert Redford is co-founder, with James, of The Redford Center, a San Francisco-based nonprofit that supports environmental activism through storytelling and filmmaking. James Redford, a documentary filmmaker, is the center's chairman.

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— Sean P. Means

835 a.m.: Utah restaurants can continue to resell products

Many restaurants, bakeries, caterers and other food businesses have been able to survive the coronavirus shutdown by repackaging and reselling items they had in their inventories.

The Utah Department of Agriculture and Food has announced that the practice can continue as part of the state's COVID-19 response.

"Though some restaurants may open over the next few days or weeks," Agricultural Commissioner Logan Wilde said in a news release, "this program is important to continue for the immediate future to allow an additional revenue stream."

Under these temporary guidelines, restaurants may repackage and resell anything they bought from a food service provider, the notice states.

Restaurants are allowed to sell the commodities to consumers — but not other businesses. They also must follow proper health guidelines when handling and labeling the products to be resold.

More information is available on the department website.

— Kathy Stephenson

650 a.m.: The unemployment rate is above 12%

Pandemic-related job losses in Utah slowed again last week, down significantly from their highs in early April but still hefty compared to past recessions.

The 11,830 Utahns who sought unemployment benefits the week ending April 25 have pushed the Beehive States total to at least 146,303 or more.

Those idled employees are part of a staggering total of 30.3 million Americans now thrown out of work by the coronavirus outbreak, the U.S. Department of Labor reported Thursday. That's after another 3.8 million Americans applied for benefits last week.

The nation's unemployment rate stands somewhere above 12.4%, the Labor Department said, some seven weeks after the crisis first began triggering widespread layoffs, furloughs and pay cuts.

— Tony Semerad

Load-Date: May 2, 2020