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# CAPE MAY COUNTY HERALD

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## Restaurant Workers Test Positive?

### Health Department Says Not Required to Report

By VINCE CONTI

COURT HOUSE - It has been eight months of taking protective measures, avoiding unprotected gatherings, and sitting at home for prolonged periods.

Whether driven by state restrictions that closed

bars, restaurants, and other gatherings and entertainment venues, or a reluctance to risk infection, as these venues began partial reopenings, many people have now begun to venture to indoor settings to have dinner, meet with friends, or enjoy a cocktail without having it in a sealed takeout container.

What happens if that restaurant finds it has a staff member who tests positive for COVID-19? Would patrons know about it? Is anyone obligated to tell them? Must the restaurant post some public notice? Does the establishment have to close?

These are questions people are asking, as COVID-19 case counts continue to grow.

When asked these questions, the Cape May County Health Department said that a restaurant or bar must close immediately "in the event of a presumptive or actual positive COVID-19 case of a worker, patron or vendor."

State and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines explain the cleaning and sanitization protocols that must take place before the establishment can reopen.

There is no requirement for a restaurant, bar,

or other venue to make an announcement if an employee tests positive. Health officials investigating the case will notify other employees and close contacts of the infected individual while maintaining confidentiality.

The Health Department would also set guidelines for when the employee can return to work. Health officials would also monitor other employees' test results.

The restaurant or bar is not required to notify patrons or the public via a public notice, but most

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### Analysis

## Schools Fending Off Virus

By VINCE CONTI

COURT HOUSE - As confirmed COVID-19 cases continue mounting, the county's schools are doing well in troubled times.

During a television interview, Gov. Phil Murphy said rumors that he is going to close the state's 3,000 schools to stem the rising numbers of community spread cases of COVID-19 are false. He added that "back to school two months in has worked quite well. So far, so good."

In Cape May County, one can point to the schools as a bright spot, as cases here are growing rapidly in the community at large.

Currently, one school announced a closure from Nov. 9-23. Wildwood Crest School District addressed a letter to school families Nov. 5, noting three new positive tests among students, all siblings.

So far, positive tests at the school were not traced to in-school spread. Crest Memorial School was not listed on the state update of school outbreaks Nov. 11.

The designation of a school outbreak by the state requires that two or more cases occur and that the cases can be traced to in-school spread.

Currently, 56 schools across the state are on the list, involving 192 individual cases of in-school infection of either students or staff.

In late September, three county schools, two public and one private, were listed. All three closed for varying periods and reopened without further incident.

One of those schools in the Dennis Township School District had one student and four positive cases among staff at the start of the school year. After closing and following Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) protocols, the school reopened and has since had one staff member test positive without connection to in-school contagion.

Cape Christian Academy had two students test positive and closed for two weeks. No further cases surfaced.

The same is true for the Upper Township

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## Plastic Bag Ban Receives Little Attention from Businesses

By BILL BARLOW

COURT HOUSE - Among 2020's many lessons, Americans have learned that a lot can change in a short time.

New Jersey endured a devastating pandemic, and with it, restrictions on daily life that would have once seemed unthinkable. Face masks have become commonplace, sometimes even a fashion statement, and next year, marijuana will be legal for adults after a vote to amend the state constitution that would have seemed impossible a decade ago.

On the national stage, longstanding norms and

precedents were challenged or tossed aside with numbing regularity.

Maybe it should be no surprise that a new law with sweeping significance received little notice or discussion.

Gov. Phil Murphy Nov. 4 signed into law a ban on single-use plastic and paper bags in all stores and food service businesses in New Jersey, in what has been described as the most stringent such ban in the nation.

As the new restrictions are phased in, restaurants and other food service companies will no longer be permitted to use polystyrene containers, the generic term for lightweight plastic foam,

often described with the brand name Styrofoam.

Many of the conditions will go into effect in May 2022, while the first step starts in November 2021. At that point, food service businesses will only be allowed to provide single-use plastic straws on request.

The focus will be on increasing the use of reusable bags, according to Murphy's office.

Some businesses and industry groups opposed the law. In Cape May County, Vicki Clark, president, Cape May County Chamber of Commerce said she has not heard much about the ban from local businesses.

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*"Quite honestly, businesses are dealing with a lot more pressing issues. Maybe they just haven't grasped the reality. They have a lot on their plates right now. They may not yet realize the magnitude of the change."*

— Vicki Clark, president, Cape May County Chamber of Commerce

### Analysis

## COVID-19 Update: New Case Growth Soars

By VINCE CONTI

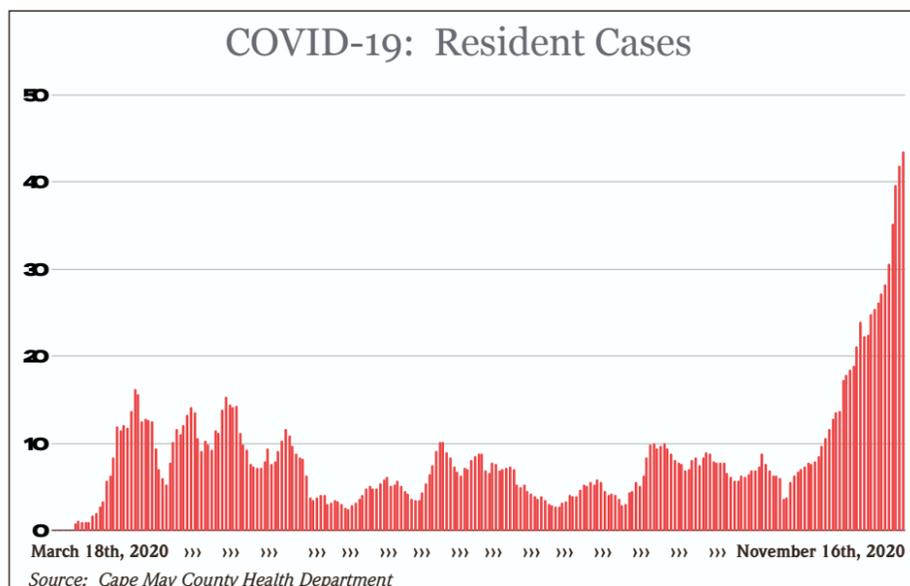
COURT HOUSE - Since the county recorded its first case of COVID-19 infection March 18, 2,186 residents had confirmed cases of the disease.

In 16 days of November, 24% of the total number of cases since March were reported. Each day is bringing new case numbers that exceed any the county saw from the pandemic's start.

State health officials said that this fall second wave, combined with fatigue with social distancing protocols, is likely to result in continued growth in the virus's spread, placing rising pressure on medical facilities following a two-week lag from the height of the infections.

Gov. Phil Murphy responded with new restrictions. Maximum participation in indoor gatherings was lowered from 25 to 10. Bars and restaurants are required to close indoor service at 10 p.m. Interstate youth sports games were banned. Municipalities and counties are empowered to institute curfews if they feel such a move would slow the spread.

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