

Increased virus levels found in city's wastewater

Mayor: 800-1,000 Clemson residents could have virus

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THE JOURNAL

CLEMSON — Increased levels of COVID-19 have been detected in Clemson's wastewater, and the city's mayor says almost

1,000 people could have the virus based on testing samples.

On Sunday, the city and Clemson University officials made the announcement after testing began last week

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on wastewater going into the Cochran Road Wastewater Treatment Plant.

"The sample was shipped to Tennessee, and it takes a few days turnaround," Clemson utilities director Benjie McGill told The Journal. "It comes through your waste. If you've got the virus, it comes through your waste and goes into the sewer. We're collecting samples of the influent, which is the beginning of the plant."

McGill added the system's drinking water is "perfectly fine" and the waste is "influent only" and doesn't make it to the treatment process. He said the university approached the city about conducting the tests.

Mayor J.C. Cook said the city's Economic Development Advisory Committee will meet this week to let businesses know they have the right to require customers wear a mask. Cook said the city would "encourage them to do that."

"We don't know who or

what, we just know it's coming from the portion of town that serves a lot of the student apartment complexes," Cook said. "It's not from the Clemson-Pendleton treatment plant, which we're having tested now, that serves most of our single-family residences."

"What we want to do is urge people to wear their masks and do their social distancing."

Last week, S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) officials issued a bleak warning that nearly 18.4 percent of the more than 22,000 confirmed cases across the state are in people ages 21 to 30.

"The increases that we're seeing serve as a warning that young adults and youth are not immune to COVID-19," DHEC physician consultant Dr. Brannon Traxler said. "They also tell us that younger South Carolinians are not taking social distancing seriously."

The Clemson area reported 12 cases of the virus as of last Wednesday morning, according to DHEC's reported coronavirus cases by ZIP code.

In Monday's latest virus update, DHEC announced the Clemson area now has 82 cases, along with 504 more suspected cases.