

Next Virtual Townhall set for April 8 at noon - and comments from March 17 townhall

By public affairs 07 April 2020



Commandant in virtual townhall: Be kind, keep open communication, we'll work through this together

On March 17, at noon, our three commanders responded to dozens of community questions at the virtual townhall meeting live via www.facebook.com/usawc, Maj. Gen. John Kem with Garrison Commander Lt. Col. Courtney Short and Dunham Army Health Clinic Commander Lt. Col. Jennifer Saenz.

The next virtual townhall is scheduled for WED, APRIL 8, at noon – at www.facebook.com/usawc

This is the normal date/time for the monthly Community Leaders Information Forum, to which representatives from our community are invited to participate – usually. We will use the CLIF date and time to cover all relevant information for the community. **If you wish to ensure your question is addressed, send your question or concern to: USArmy.carlisle.awc.mbx.atwc-cpa@mail.mil**

The following captures most-not-all comments by the commanders at the March 17 virtual townhall, deleting those that have been overcome by newer decisions in order to maintain clarity of policy and intent. These are

organized below: **health decisions & implications, command-wide decisions, garrison services**.

The Commandant began and closed the townhall meeting:

“I’ve been impressed by the overall Army War College and Carlisle Barracks team who, over the last week, has worked through a changing situation -- public information from state officials, Dept of Defense officials -- and we’ve been working through implications of all that for the community.... From my view, we’re trying to mitigate risk, make sure that we prioritize health and safety of the community of Carlisle Barracks – men, women and children – and at the same time, make sure that some of the basic safety functions and security functions and some of the educational functions continue.

“Let me close this up by thanking you [commanders] for your leadership Thank you for your efforts in trying to inform everybody and keep everybody reassured.

“Remember this is very different and very dynamic. I don’t think anyone can recall a time when so many things are happening at the federal, state and local level as well as the Department of Defense and across the whole of government. Here, we’re trying to work at our local level as best possible to clarify all of that, to keep us all safe and healthy, while still allowing the things that need to happen to happen.

The way we treat each other really matters -- particularly when people are uncertain, they’re stressed. Even when you feel those things, please have open communication, be kind, be nice to people, and we’ll work through this together,” said Kem.

HEALTH DECISIONS & IMPLICATIONS

The decisions we’re directed to do formally by DOD and guidance for social distancing and having people not do things in large groups, all the service work and health work are in a measured way iaw national and state guidelines, said MG Kem.

“We follow CDC guidance – and I encourage you to do so as well. Looking at where you’ve traveled, have you come in contact with anyone who has the virus, then take it upon yourself to stay home. If you have questions, you can always contact your healthcare provider,” said LTC Saenz. She continued --

“Guidance on response to COVID-19 is continuously evolving and we’re adapting our processes as the situation develops. Our first priority is the health and safety of our healthcare workforce and our patients.

Mitigating the spread of the virus is key by following recommended preventive measures such as frequent hand washing, avoiding close contact with sick individuals, covering coughs and sneezes, cleaning frequently touched objects and surfaces, staying home when feeling ill, and avoiding touching eyes, nose, and/or mouth.

“We recommend that you call ahead before coming to our clinic or any health care facility in the area. If you are a beneficiary you can also call the Tricare nurse advice line [1-800-TRICARE option 1 = 1-800-874-2273 option 1]. Contact your supervisors on guidance for quarantine or isolation procedures.

“As a precaution... Last week, we implemented a medical screening process for all patients and visitors to the clinic. The pre-screening questions are necessary to determine individual risk levels of COVID-19 exposure and transmission prior to entering the facility. This includes gathering information related to travel history or respiratory symptoms. Visitors identified as low risk will be able to continue on into the facility. Visitors determined to have positive travel history and respiratory symptoms will be redirected for further screening and/or testing instructions. Please allow extra time when coming in for appointments.

“We are working on getting the capability to test for COVID-19. We do not have the test kits yet, within the next week or so hopefully,” said Saenz.

“It is our intent to only test high risk patients with active respiratory symptoms. It is not our intent to use it as a screening tool for large populations. If individuals are found to be at high risk on the initial three ? screening, they will be taken to a separate area to complete a secondary screening. Based on that assessment the provider will determine whether or not to test for COVID-19. We will test for the Flu to rule that out. If individuals test positive for the flu, they will not be tested for COVID-19. There is minimal risk of co-infection. If anyone is tested or found to be at risk they will be recommended for home isolation. We expect the test to take a couple of days to come back – at which point they may continue to be recommended for quarantine if high risk or having been exposed. Just because they are negative today does not mean they won’t develop symptoms at a later date.

These are the current screening questions --

Travel Exposure – have you returned from travel to a highly affected country in the last 14 days?, e.g., China, South Korea, Japan, Iran, Italy

Contact Exposure – In the last 14 days, have you been in contact with any person suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19?

Symptoms: In the last 14 days have you experienced any of the following symptoms – Fever, Cough, Difficulty Breathing -- ?

If diagnosed and over it -- have to be one week past symptoms and get 2 negative swabs 24 hours apart

No quarantine specific instructions for travel within the US – it is a question of contact – either tested or confirmed.

Pregnancy – no indication for stricter protection.”

COMMAND-WIDE PLANNING & DECISIONS

About PCS timelines (for summertime permanent change of station moves) -- “It remains to be seen. Stop-move is effective for 60 days with the exception of people who are being separated or retiring.... Beyond 60 days we don't know. There're only so many trucks ...

"I've heard a lot of questions already about why are we doing this, why are we not doing that, I heard somebody was doing this some part of our continent what we're not doing is getting in a race to take action in a specific way just because we heard about it from somebody," said Kem.

"What we're not trying to do is try to mitigate and do every policy idea we've heard from anywhere across the country, what we are doing just trying to be deliberate and do case specific decisions and focused on prioritizing health and welfare but as I said up front, the commissary the exchange, clinic, child development center in some of the safety center services supporting access to the base all those things still need to continue in some way shape or form with increased protocols protection so that's the kind of formal decision way we're trying to look through all the different possibilities of things we do as the situation evolves and inevitably an impact of the 60 days. Until we get a better sense of when normalcy will return, we'll try to plan but won't fully understand the impact," said MG Kem.

GARRISON SERVICES

- As of March 17, the vet clinic has limited service because TDY veterinarians were unable to travel here.
- Sports & Fitness -- gyms are open; Bowling Center closed; Group fitness & intramural basketball and sauna use are suspended
- All Leisure Travel trips cancelled thru mid-April
- Food services: Bowling Center snackbar closed; LVCC Ballroom dance lessons postponed; Joint Deli in Root Hall is grab-n-go or block seating for social distancing; Subway is grab-n-go
- All confirmed closures, changes etc -- SEE www.armywarcollege.edu COVID-19 article

'Child Development Center and Youth Services are currently open; we are assessing need and demand and capabilities. We ask parents to assess their needs in anticipation of possible future closure," said Short who note that Youth Sports and "open rec" at YS are cancelled.

Commissary and Exchange are both open to eligible patrons; both coordinate daily with Garrison command to review cleaning and demand. Regular re-stocking is on-going.