

Baldwin County COVID-19 Situation Summary: 2020-2021

Hurricanes and severe weather are typically the first types of incidents that come to mind when the term “disaster” is mentioned in Baldwin County, Alabama. However, 2020 changed that. Placing our historic 2020 hurricane season aside, this summary focuses on Baldwin County’s ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This summary is intended to cover events and challenges spanning the duration of the pandemic.

On March 13, 2020, President Trump declared a National Emergency because of COVID-19, and Governor Ivey declared a state of emergency for Alabama. On March 14, 2020, the Baldwin County Commission declared a local state of emergency.

With the Governor’s and the Commission’s declarations, major changes occurred in the county:

- County-owned facilities were either immediately closed to the public, granted limited public access, or switched to a digital-service and/or phone format.
- The governor closed the beaches and “non-essential” and close contact businesses.
- Certain public gatherings were suspended.
- Governor Ivey issued a Stay-at-Home Order for Alabama.

The Baldwin County Commission recognized a need for balance between protecting Baldwin citizens and responding to the pandemic as well as considerations for commerce:

- On April 28, 2020, the Baldwin County Commission voted unanimously to begin a phased reopening of County facilities, set to begin May 4, 2020.
- On April 30, 2020, Alabama’s Stay at Home Order was replaced with the Safer at Home Order, and beaches and retail businesses reopened. The Safer at Home Order included a mask mandate from July 16, 2020, through April 9, 2021.
- The Baldwin County Commission formed Baldwin Together, a county-wide, long-term recovery effort for those impacted by COVID-19. The program started September 1, 2020, and continues to assist residents of Baldwin County. To date, the program has served 234 cases and has allocated \$154,101.65.
- On December 28, 2020, the Baldwin County Health Department began COVID-19 vaccinations for healthcare workers and EMS personnel.
- On January 19, 2021, COVID-19 vaccinations were moved from the Baldwin County Health Department to the Daphne Civic Center, where a Mass Vaccination Clinic had been set up.
- On February 2, 2021, the Mass Vaccination Clinic moved from the Daphne Civic Center to OWA in Foley.
- The week of March 8, 2021, the vaccination clinic was moved from OWA back to the Baldwin County Health Department in Robertsdale.

At this point, and after two COVID-19 surges, the number of positive cases were the lowest they had been. The healthcare systems were finally experiencing some reprieve.

- Alabama's mask mandate expired April 9, 2021, and the state transitioned from the Safer at Home Order to the Safer Apart Order. Governor Ivey emphasized personal responsibility.
- The Safer Apart Order expired May 31, 2021.
- The Governor's state of emergency expired July 6, 2021.
- The Commission's local state of emergency expired July 20, 2021.

Then, we began seeing a third surge of positive cases, and the healthcare system became taxed once again.

- Baldwin County is now considered a COVID hotspot.
- Our Health and Medical Lifeline transitioned from yellow to red indicating disruption of critical services.
- Federal resource requests have been submitted.
- A COVID-19 testing site was activated at the PZK Hall to decompress the burden on the hospitals.
- As of August 25, 2021, Baldwin County Emergency Management Agency conducted its 148th briefing with its ESF8 Health and Medical partners.

Moving forward Baldwin County Emergency Management Agency will continue to plan for, respond to, recover from, and mitigate both natural and human-caused disasters in Baldwin County. Recoveries from COVID-19 and Hurricane Sally are ongoing while we remain diligent in assessing and forecasting the needs of the county. We are providing support to our partners during this third surge of COVID-19 by maintaining situational awareness, filling resource gaps, and coordinating with stakeholders to prepare for future potential impacts.