

# Morning News



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## LIFE SAVERS



MATTHEW ROBERTSON, MORNING NEWS

Howe Springs Fire Marshal Michael Page holds one mask while two others from the pet oxygen mask donations sit on the bumper of a fire engine at the headquarters station in Florence.

### Donation ensures Florence County firefighters equipped to save pets

**MATTHEW ROBERTSON**  
Morning News  
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FLORENCE — Pee Dee pets can breathe a bit easier because of a donation of pet oxygen masks to several fire departments.

Pet Oxygen Kit Project Inc. on Thursday donated 77 pet oxygen kits to equip fire departments covering four South Carolina counties in the Pee Dee region.

In Florence County fire departments received 45 of those kits — enough to equip every fire department in the county with one kit for each of their first-out engines, said Sam Brockington, county fire/rescue coordinator.

“Although these counties represent the Pee Dee region, our mission is to equip every

station in South Carolina with these life-saving kits to save our pets who are so dear to all our hearts,” said Mary Ellen Tobias, co-founder of Pet Oxygen Kit Project Inc.

“The pet oxygen masks are a great asset for any fire department to have,” said Howe Springs Fire Marshal Michael Page. “We help any and all people in need and animals too.”

There are three different sized masks in each kit — the same masks that veterinarians use in their offices, Page said.

“Anything that breathes air we can use this to apply the oxygen to,” Page said.

The masks are durable, can be decontaminated and reused.

“It’s not a one-and-done

tool,” Page said.

The masks also won’t be the first of their kind on Howe Springs engines.

“We have — as probably every fire department does, our members are animal lovers, as are most people — we had a few people speak up and say this would be a good idea for our department to have,” Page said. And the department purchased some.

The additional masks will come in handy, especially at house fires where firefighters are most likely to encounter animals in distress.

Page said homeowners who have pets should place a sticker or some sign on a door where emergency responders can see it and react accordingly.

#### Just The Facts

Florence County and Pee Dee mask distribution:	
West Florence	4
Windy Hill	4
Howe Springs	6
Sardis-Timmonsville	5
Johnsonville	3
Hanna-Salem Friendfield	6
Olanta	2
Florence	5
Lake City	2
South Lynchess	5

**What other counties got:**

- Darlington: 13 kits
- Marion: 13 kits
- Williamsburg: 6 kits

### COVID-19 1,265 new cases reported

**STAFF REPORTS**

COLUMBIA — The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control on Friday announced 1,265 new confirmed cases and 10 new probable cases of the novel coronavirus COVID-19, 21 additional confirmed deaths and 5 new probable deaths.

The Pee Dee reported 142 cases. Florence County reported 55 cases, Darlington County 40 cases, Chesterfield County 145 cases, Dillon and Williamsburg counties 11 cases each, Marlboro County six cases and Marion County five cases.

Florence County and Williamsburg County each reported one death.

This brings the total number of confirmed cases to 97,554, probable cases to 708, confirmed deaths to 1,883, and 79 probable deaths.

As of Thursday, a total of 824,500 tests have been conducted in the state. DHEC’s Public Health Laboratory is operating extended hours and is testing specimens seven days a week, and the Public Health Laboratory’s current timeframe for providing results to health care providers is 24-48 hours.

The total number of individual test results reported to DHEC Thursday statewide was 6,910 (not including antibody tests) and the percent positive was 18.3%.

Currently, there are 114 mobile testing events scheduled through September 29 with new testing events added regularly. Find a mobile testing clinic event near you at [scdhec.gov/covid19mobileclinics](https://scdhec.gov/covid19mobileclinics).

Residents can visit [scdhec.gov/covid19testing](https://scdhec.gov/covid19testing) for information about getting tested at one of 223 permanent COVID-19 testing facilities across the state.

As of Friday morning, 2,614 inpatient beds were available and 8,480 were in use, which is a 76.44% statewide inpatient bed utilization rate. Of the 8,480 inpatient beds currently used, 1,415 are occupied by patients who have either tested positive or are under investigation for COVID-19. Of 1,540 ventilators, 512 are in use and 231 of those are COVID-19 patients.

#### JOHNSONSONVILLE

### Municipal building nears completion

**MATTHEW ROBERTSON**  
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JOHNSONSONVILLE — Below budget and ahead of schedule — that’s how Johnsonville Mayor Johnny Hanna describes the city’s new city hall that is now taking shape on what was the parking lot of a grocery.

“This was the old IGA parking lot. We purchased the property with the vision of doing exactly what we’re doing,” Hanna said during a quick tour through the building — framework done inside and roof ready to go on. “We’re just trying to improve it, move forward, modernize. As it’s taking shape I feel like the citizens are taking ownership and some pride in it.”

When completed this will be the first purpose-built municipal building the city has had, said David Mace, downtown development manager.

Other buildings have just been “taken over and renovated” by the city.

“There was a lot of meetings, a lot of planning, a lot of overlooking plans,” Hanna said.

“We got a little big to start with and sized it down, tried to do it as economically possible and still keep it possible,” Hanna said.

The building includes a wish list of needs and will double as a community building.

“Everything was well thought out,” Hanna said.

Once completed the building will have a cluster of small of-

fices for city leaders, an area for the city clerk along with a water and sewer office and drive-thru payment window and some currently unused space into which the city can grow.

It will also have an emergency operations center and a council chamber capable of seating 120 people.

“Before you had fire, city and police operating from three different sites,” Hanna said. “Now can put three in one building without chance of losing power.”

The new council chamber will have video display panels and cameras for Zoom-style meetings and can be closed off from the building’s offices to allow it to serve as a community room,



MATTHEW ROBERTSON, MORNING NEWS

The Johnsonville municipal building on West Broadway Street is ahead of schedule and under budget.

Hanna said.

“Hopefully we can fill those seats with concerned citizens and move it forward as a city,” Hanna said. “Have more people involved than just a few.”

As the city moves forward with construction, Hanna said, the fate of the current city hall remains up in the air.

He said several options were being discussed.



### Reaching census non-responders

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### Up to 8,000 attendees can be at Darlington Raceway for Southern 500.

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