

NEWS

Staunton, Augusta County libraries to close buildings but continue curbside services

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STAUNTON — Staunton and Augusta County libraries will be closing their doors to the public come next week.

According to a release on Friday, the closures are coming after the rise in local COVID-19 cases and new statewide restrictions. The buildings will be closed to the public starting Dec. 16, but will be offering curbside services.

Both library systems have been open to the public since the late-summer. Waynesboro Public Library has remained closed to the public, but has been offering curbside pick-up.

The decision to close the buildings comes after both localities' library directors attended an Augusta Health update, the release said.

“After hearing about the positivity rates and hospital capacity, we began to seriously discuss whether we were sending the right message to our communities by remaining open,” Staunton Public Library Director Sarah Skrobis said in a release.

Governor Northam’s latest announcement of new restrictions then also led to the libraries deciding to take action.

A day after breaking the record for a single-day count of positive tests at 4,293, the Virginia Department of Health reported 3,915 new cases statewide Thursday, its second-highest one-day total for new coronavirus cases. Virginia's overall case-growth rate is now hovering at the 11% mark, the highest it has ever been since the pandemic's onset in March and double the rate from November.

Starting at 12:01 a.m. Monday, a midnight-5 a.m. curfew will go into effect for everyone who is not commuting to and from work, is not in search of food or medical goods and services, is not traveling to or from school or assisting someone in an immediate need. Northam is calling it a "modified" stay-at-home order.

“Governor Northam encouraged people to stay home if they didn’t need to be out. By relying on curbside service, we can more safely serve patrons while also helping to limit community spread,”

Augusta County Library Director Diantha McCauley said in a release.

Both library systems will continue with their normal operating hours through the end of business Tuesday, Dec. 15.

Starting Wednesday, Dec. 16, librarians will offer reference and reader services by phone and online. Residents can pick up their arrived holds using contactless drop-in curbside service.

Each library will also offer modified mobile printing, faxing and simple copy services using curbside procedures.

The Augusta County Library will also be providing a limited number of laptops and Chromebooks to checkout and use in the Fishersville library parking lot.

To utilize curbside pick-up, patrons can use the library catalog at ValleyLibraries.org to browse and place holds. Once they receive an arrived holds notice, patrons may drop by their local library to pick up materials by following the local procedures. Anyone experiencing difficulty with their account or the catalog is asked to please contact their local library for assistance.

The Augusta County Library will offer curbside pick-up service Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information visit augustacountylibrary.org/ or call 540-885-3961.

Staunton Public Library will offer drop-in curbside pick-up service Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and Friday and Saturday, 12:30 - 4:00 pm. For more information, visit StauntonLibrary.org or call 540-332-3902.

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Laura Peters is the trending topics reporter at The News Leader. Have a news tip on local trends or businesses? Or a good feature? You can reach reporter Laura Peters (she/her) at lpeters@newsleader.com. Follow her @peterslaura. Subscribe to The News Leader at newsleader.com.