

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Changes to Directed Health Measures Due to Increased Spread of COVID-19

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) has received updated Directed Health Measures for the health district that will apply to all counties in Nebraska. Some of the changes include 25% capacity for indoor gatherings and events, 6 feet required between groups of 8 people or less in any setting, and masks required for any indoor business where people will be closer than 6 feet for 15 minutes or more. These changes will be in effect from November 11th to November 30th, 2020.

SWNPHD had 184 new cases of COVID-19 reported from November 2nd to November 9th. A breakout by county includes: Chase – 25; Dundy – 8; Frontier – 6; Furnas – 36; Hayes – 2; Hitchcock – 10; Keith – 26; Perkins – 9; Red Willow – 62. This brings the totals for the health district to 1131 cases with 686 cases recovered. Many of these cases are linked to direct contact with another positive case; however, community spread is occurring across all nine counties. An additional four deaths due to COVID-19 were also reported.

The spread of COVID-19 in Nebraska has reached the point that additional action must be taken in order to prevent the healthcare system from being overwhelmed. Other areas are already seeing delays in care due to lack of hospital beds or difficulty arranging transfers to other hospitals. While the hospitals in SWNPHD's nine-county health district are currently handling the extra patient load, the situation could change very quickly. The effect of this change would be felt throughout the area and goes beyond just COVID-19 patients. A lack of hospital beds, especially trauma beds, would mean delays in care for victims of accidents or others with immediate needs.

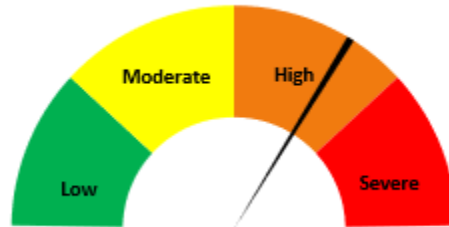
Governor Ricketts in his press conference on November 9th stated, "We need to do more. Nebraskans can help out and prevent more restrictions by following the guidelines to protect our healthcare system and keep each other safe." If more people will choose to avoid close contact in crowded spaces, it will make a difference in the number of people getting sick, which will free up resources so that everyone who needs care will be able to get it.

The COVID-19 Community Risk Dial for the week of November 9th remains at orange, meaning residents of southwest Nebraska have a high risk of contracting COVID-19. Testing is available but may require travel. Healthcare systems in the health district and across the state are burdened by the number of people hospitalized for COVID-19. Orange level recommendations include wearing a mask in public, washing hands and surfaces often, limiting travel, and working from home when possible. High-risk and vulnerable individuals should avoid public places.

COVID-19 information is available at dhhs.ne.gov and swhealth.ne.gov. You can also follow SWNPHD on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. SWNPHD serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas,

Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. SWNPHD is located at 404 West 10th St (1 block north of Arby's) in McCook.

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COVID ORANGE: High Risk of COVID-19 Spread		
General Public	Outside the Home – Work, Social, In Public	At Home
Physical Distancing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay at home unless traveling for work, medical care, or food • Distance at least 6 feet from anyone outside the home • Work from home if possible • Individual outdoor activities such as walking, biking, etc. are acceptable • Smallest number of contacts feasible • Gatherings only with modifications for COVID-19 • Events only as guided by SWNPHD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No distancing for people without symptoms, unless they are under quarantine as a result of being exposed to someone who is infected • Self-isolation of symptomatic persons • Outdoor activities with members of your household are acceptable
Face Covering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face coverings strongly recommended for anyone over 2 years old 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No face coverings for people without symptoms, unless they are under quarantine as a result of being exposed to someone who is infected • Face coverings for symptomatic people
Hand Washing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequently wash hands for at least 20 seconds, especially after touching high contact surfaces, sneezing/coughing/touching face, or before eating • Use hand sanitizer when handwashing is inaccessible or infeasible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequently wash hands for at least 20 seconds, especially after touching high contact surfaces, sneezing/coughing/touching face, or before eating
Illness Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If sick with Flu-like or COVID-like symptoms, Stay at Home • Minimize contact with symptomatic people • Daily temperature checks at work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily temperature checks • Monitor for COVID-like symptoms • Contact healthcare provider if sick • Monitor the health of anyone in your home with COVID-like symptoms
Disinfecting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid bare hand contact with any high touch surface • Use barrier such as paper towel or clothing when bare hand contact is unavoidable • Wash hands or apply sanitizer after touching high contact surfaces • Enhanced disinfection, especially for high contact surfaces (door/other handles, light switches, bathroom fixtures) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced disinfection, especially for high contact surfaces (door/other handles, light switches, bathroom fixtures)
At-Risk or Vulnerable Population	For adults over age 65, anyone with underlying health conditions, and other populations at heightened risk from COVID-19: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay home as much as possible • Rely on help for needs outside the home (groceries, medications, etc.) • Distance from those working outside of the home 	