

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COVID-19 Community Risk Dial Moved to Orange for SWNPHD Counties

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) has moved the COVID-19 Community Risk Dial for the week of December 14th to orange, meaning residents of southwest Nebraska are at high risk of contracting COVID-19. The risk dial was lowered from red to orange thanks in part to many people in the health district making an extra effort to follow the steps that decrease the spread of COVID-19. SWNPHD congratulates those efforts and encourages everyone to continue to be vigilant through the holiday season to keep our area at a safer risk level and ease the burden on our hospitals and clinics.

One of the best ways to keep our communities safer is to wear a mask or face covering when you will be around people you do not live with. Masks work by trapping the droplets that the virus is living in, so you do not breathe in what someone else has breathed out. These droplets are larger than the viruses themselves, which is why they become trapped while air is still able to pass through. Masks are better at trapping droplets when they have more than one layer and when they fit well, meaning they cover your nose and mouth without large gaps.

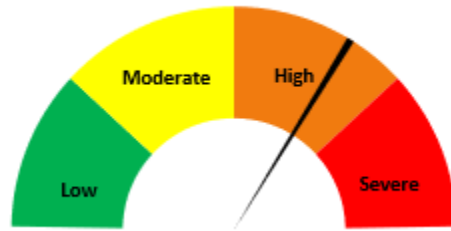
More orange level recommendations include washing hands and surfaces often, limiting travel, and working from home when possible. High-risk and vulnerable individuals should avoid public places, since there is still a great deal of community spread of COVID-19 occurring in all nine counties.

The governor of Nebraska has also lowered the Directed Health Measures (DHMs) based on the amount of hospital capacity used for COVID patients statewide, which has dropped below 20%. Local health departments like SWNPHD still make their own recommendations for their health districts, based on the situations in their counties. This includes criteria such as the number of positive cases compared to the number being tested, the amount of community spread occurring, the availability of testing for COVID-19, and conditions at local hospitals and clinics.

SWNPHD had 240 new cases of COVID-19 reported December 8th to December 14th. A breakout by county includes: Chase – 11; Dundy – 11; Frontier – 10; Furnas – 27; Hayes – 4; Hitchcock – 22; Keith – 41; Perkins – 18; Red Willow – 96. This brings the totals for the health district to 2538 cases with 2190 cases recovered. SWNPHD also received confirmation of 4 additional deaths due to COVID-19.

The full Directed Health Measures with the new changes can be found at dhhs.ne.gov and at 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 	