

NEWS RELEASE

August 31, 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Southwest Nebraska in Phase 4 DHM's and COVID-19 update

Since moving to Phase 4 of the Directed Health Measures (DHM) on August 1st, Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) has seen a 48% increase or 74 cases. The movement from Phase 3 to Phase 4 does not change an individual's actions to stay healthy. Communities also need to work with their residents to keep the COVID virus at a minimum.

“We know the virus is in southwest Nebraska. We are seeing an increase in numbers as testing options become more available,” said Myra Stoney, Health Director of SWNPHD. “Of the 74 cases from August 1-31, 66% are direct contact with another person with COVID-19, 18% are community spread (unknown origin); 16% are spread from travel, usually to funerals, weddings and other family events. The health department has seen several clusters of cases in the last month, which means they are traced back to a common source. The transition from Phase 3 to Phase 4 of the DHMs does not change an individual's personal responsibility for reducing virus transmission. Practicing safety measures such as maintaining good social distancing, wearing a face covering when appropriate, washing hands frequently and staying home when you are sick is everyone's responsibility to help stop the spread of COVID-19 and to protect your friends, family, and neighbors.”

“Communities need to get back to normal, but should consider activities within their community and how to safely host those activities.” The health department has an event planning guide located on the website. It walks the event planner through several phases of the event to assure a safer event.

The health department has seen 16 new cases this week. Details by county, age, sex etc. can be found on the website at www.swhealth.ne.gov on the COVID-19 page under general info and maps. This information is updated several times per week.

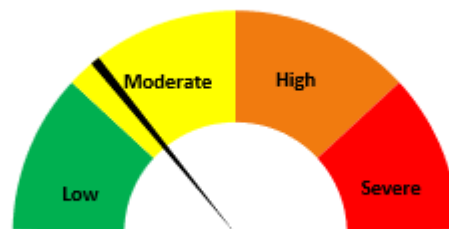
The COVID-19 Community Risk Dial for the week of August 31st is yellow. The dial for southwest Nebraska will be updated every Monday using local data to determine the risk. The main factors that will be considered for the community risk dial include the following:

- The increase or decrease in the number of COVID-19 cases
- The increase or decrease in the percent of tests that are positive
- The availability of testing

- The ability of the Health Department to conduct investigations and contact tracing
- The number of people hospitalized from COVID-19
- The capacity of the local health care system
- The availability of personal protective equipment and critical medical equipment

Guidance documents can be found on the COVID-19 Information pages of dhhs.ne.gov or on SWNPHD’s website www.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 Yellow: Moderate Risk of COVID-19 Spread		
General Public	Outside the Home – Work, Social, In Public	At Home
Physical Distancing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider staying at home most of the time, with caution for non-essential travel and work • 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 • Cautious expansion of interactions with others, outdoor activities preferred • 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 distancing are acceptable.
Face Covering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face coverings suggested when unable to distance • Face coverings for symptomatic people 	<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 ill 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"> • Monitor for 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 	