



Yakima Health District

Media Release

For immediate release: March 23, 2020

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First COVID-19 Death in Yakima County

Yakima, WA –“Today, we received the devastating news that Yakima County has suffered the first death related to COVID-19. The deceased was an elderly resident of a long-term care facility in Yakima County. This is a tragedy for all of us and our thoughts go out to the family and friends of this individual. We are working day and night in partnership with healthcare, social service, and local government leaders to help slow the spread of disease. Our collective goal is to avoid more deaths among the most vulnerable in our community.” Said Andre Fresco, Executive Director of the Yakima Health District.

The Yakima Health District released a Stay at Home order on March 22, 2020 with the intent to take immediate action to slow the spread of COVID-19. The Stay at Home order requires that all individuals stay at home except as needed for essential travel such as for food, medications and medical care and for jobs that maintain continuity of operations of critical infrastructure sectors. The Yakima Health District made this decision after conferring with local leaders and reviewing the current data. From Friday to Sunday the case count in Yakima County increased by approximately 150%, with about a quarter of these cases among healthcare workers. In addition, the Yakima Health District, in partnership with the Washington State Department of Health are now investigating COVID-19 in two local long-term care facilities.

“While all healthcare partners have worked together to prepare for a disease outbreak, COVID-19 has the potential to overwhelm our healthcare system. This is a system that was already stressed with a recent hospital closure. Ultimately, the intent of this Health Order is simple: **save lives by slowing the spread of disease.**” Said Dr. Teresa Everson, Health Officer of the Yakima Health District.

The Yakima Health District understands that this decision will have many unintended consequences for many business owners and families in the weeks to come. It is the Yakima Health District’s primary goal to ensure the health and safety of our community. The lives of each and every community member matters to us. **Stay home, stay healthy, stay safe.**



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Other FAQs:

1. Why put this order out?

After reviewing the evidence coming in, we believed that immediate and purposeful action was necessary to slow the spread of disease in our community.

2. Under what authority can the Yakima Health District release this order?

[RCW 70.05.070](#) details the powers and duties of a Local Health Officer. This includes “Control and prevent the spread of any dangerous, contagious or infectious diseases that may occur within his or her jurisdiction”.

3. Where can I find the order?

The official order can be found on www.yakimahealthdistrict.org .

4. Does this order require that people stay at home, at all times?

This order requires that every Yakima County resident stay at their normal place of residence at all times except to obtain groceries food and/or other necessities, to go to medical appointments, to pick up medical prescriptions or to go outside for exercise. Any time people go into public they must ensure 6 feet of space between themselves and another person.

5. Does this mean the public should be concerned?

The majority of individuals who are affected by COVID-19 will experience mild to moderate symptoms. However, those who are most at-risk for more severe symptoms, including those older than 65, those who are pregnant and those who have underlying health conditions are the ones we must keep in mind. By practicing strict social distancing, we will be protecting our most vulnerable community members from unintended exposure to COVID-19.

6. How are the current cases related?

At this point in time, we are seeing general community spread and many cases do not have a known exposure site. All individuals with cough and fever symptoms should assume they have COVID-19 and stay at home unless working as part of critical infrastructure, practice frequent handwashing and ensure constant sanitization of frequently used areas.

7. Where do the COVID-19 cases live?

Cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed across the entire county and there is evidence of continued community spread. All individuals with cough and fever symptoms should assume they have COVID-19 and stay at home unless working as part of critical infrastructure.

8. What about the places that will remain open?



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For organizations that must remain open to provide essential services, every effort should be made to have employees work from home. If working from home is not an option, employers must ensure:

- Proper social distancing (at least 6 feet between individuals)
- Frequent sanitization of common areas
- Frequent handwashing opportunities for employees
- All sick employees, for any reason, stay at home to slow the spread of disease

9. How will this be enforced?

At this point in time, we are relying on all community members and businesses to move forward with this order as fast as they are able. We are prioritizing education first, enforcement second. If enforcement must occur, the Health Officer has the authority to partner with local law enforcement as well as to incur municipal fines at the Health Officer's discretion. Non-compliance can be reported to **509-249-6508**.

10. What can I do? What's open?

Get exercise, while maintaining efficient social distancing of at least 6 feet between individuals.

- Go for a walk
- Go for a hike
- Ride bicycles

Essential services will remain open, such as:

- Gas stations
- Pharmacies
- Food: Grocery stores, food banks, convenience stores, restaurants for take-out and delivery only
- Banks
- Laundromats/laundry services
- Essential state and local government functions will also remain open, including law enforcement and offices that provide government programs and services.

11. What's closed?

- Dine-in at restaurants
- Bars and nightclubs
- Entertainment venues
- Gyms, fitness studios, recreational facilities
- Public events and gatherings
- Convention Centers
- Hair and nail salons

12. What kinds of jobs are considered part of the "critical infrastructure sector"?

- Healthcare, public health
- Emergency services (law enforcement, fire department, public safety, public works)
- Agriculture/food



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- Energy (electricity, natural gas)
- Water and Wastewater
- Transportation and shipping
- Communications/IT
- Government and community operations (includes childcare for children of critical function employees, other services that support availability of critical function employees)
- Manufacturing that supports critical functions
- Financial services and legal services
- Hazardous material management, chemical manufacturing and management

Case Count Updates

As of this afternoon the Yakima County has **31** confirmed cases of COVID-19 as well as **10** presumptive positive cases of COVID-19.

Age Range	Case Count (Confirmed and Presumptive Positive)
0-19	1
20-29	8
30-39	9
40-49	3
50-59	6
60-69	8
70-79	3
80-89	3
Total	41

Current Status	Case Count (Confirmed and Presumptive Positive)
At Home, Recovering	40
Hospitalized	0
Deceased	1
Total	41

Gender	Case Count (Confirmed and Presumptive Positive)
Female	23
Male	18
Total	41

The Washington Department of Health has established a teleconference line for the public with questions regarding COVID-19. This number is 1 (800) 525-0127, phone lines are staffed from 6am-10pm. Interpreter services are available in multiple languages.

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