



Yakima Health District

Media Release

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Yakima County Will Remain in Phase 1 After May 31st

Yakima, WA – On May 29, 2020 Governor Inslee announced that he will not be extending the “Stay Home, Stay Healthy” Order after May 31st. Under the Governor’s “Safe Start Washington” plan, counties will continue to need to apply to move from Phase 1- Phase 4. The application process requires that demonstrate that they are prepared to move between phases.

Unfortunately, Yakima County is not meeting any of the metrics necessary to move out of Phase 1. COVID-19 activity continues to be extremely high in our community. Over the last two weeks Yakima County has seen an increase of almost **1,200** cases. Yakima’s percent positivity test rate is at almost **24%**, the highest in the state of Washington.

Hospitalizations due to confirmed cases of COVID-19 have also increased and reached an all-time high of **50** on Friday. The local hospital system is at capacity and has few Intensive Care Unit beds available in any of the three hospitals. While testing capabilities have improved, and case contact tracing capacity is being increased, there is still more progress needed before there is sufficient capacity to keep up with the caseload. Finally, the Yakima Health District continues to monitor multiple active outbreaks of COVID-19 at long-term care facilities, employers, and among other vulnerable communities.

“Unfortunately, we have not seen the spread of COVID-19 decline in our community. In fact, we are one of the few counties in the state where we continue to see an increase in cases over time. While some of the spread can be attributed to outbreaks, increasingly, we are seeing COVID-19 infection being obtained via community spread, or, from community members gathering with others outside of their household. If we want to see our community move into Phase 2, we have to double-down on our efforts to stop the spread. Studies of COVID-19 transmission show that if practiced diligently, public health recommendations work. We need to continue to stay at home as much as possible. If you must go out, wear a cloth face mask, maintain a distance of at least 6 feet from others, and wash your hands frequently and sanitize frequently used surfaces often. If you have COVID-19 symptoms get tested right away and isolate away from others. And if you’ve been in contact with someone who has or may have COVID-19, quarantine at home for 14 days after your exposure.” said Dr. Teresa Everson, Health Officer at the Yakima Health District.

“This is a call to action. The time is now to act with purpose and commitment and do everything you can to move our community forward. We applaud those who have already made the personal responsible choice to protect themselves and others. We now need local governments, all businesses and the entire community to work together to ensure we can open up as soon as is safely possible.” said Andre Fresco, Executive Director of the Yakima Health District.

Community members should continue to follow the public health recommendations of:

1. Stay at home as much as possible
2. Avoid close contact with those not in your immediate household
3. If you must go out, maintain a distance of at least 6 feet
4. Wear a mask when going out in public
5. Wash your hands frequently
6. Sanitize frequently used surfaces often

For more information:

[Safe Start Washington](#)
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