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# Emergency Declaration Extended to October 27

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## Emergency declaration continued to support public health response

 Presentation from HHS Director Marni Kuyl, Sept. 29, 2020

This week the Washington County Board of Commissioners extended by 28 days, until October 27, the county's prior declaration of emergency regarding the response to the new coronavirus. The [new emergency declaration](#), which is the eleventh adopted by the board since the pandemic first hit, continues the same authorizations, support for coordination and other actions from the prior declaration adopted on September 1.

Washington County entered phase 1 on June 1 within [Governor Kate Brown's reopening framework](#), a separate decision-making process from the board's emergency declaration decisions. The governor subsequently linked Washington County's future progress toward phase 2 to that of Clackamas and Multnomah counties. Since that time, Washington County has not met several of the governor's criteria for progressing to phase 2.

Health and Human Services Director Marni Kuyl and Epidemiologist Eva Hawes provided an overview of [the data showing where Washington County stands within the statewide reopening framework](#). A segment of the briefing is available as [a brief YouTube video](#).

Washington County is currently meeting three of the six statewide criteria, including:

- a low percentage of emergency department visits (less than 1.5% COVID-19-like illness),
- a trend in percent of tests that are positive in the last 7 days (no trend) and
- sufficient contact tracing capability.

Other measures required for Washington County to enter phase 2 are not being met, including trend in COVID-19 hospitalizations over the last 14 days (uptrend), no percentage increase in new cases (new cases have increased 26% over the last seven days) and limited community spread of the virus (over 30% of positive cases cannot be traced to a known source).

"Our labs are back online, so we are starting to see the changes in the positive numbers as expected from Labor Day," said Kuyl, who pointed out that the recent windstorm and episodes of poor air quality temporarily shut down several outdoor testing locations. Public health officials anticipate that gatherings among families and friends where public health precautions were not followed during the Labor Day weekend will register as increased positive tests roughly two weeks later. "I would expect next week we would also see impacts of fire

evacuations,” said Kuyl, explaining that many Oregonians were forced to seek shelter outside of their usual household circles while escaping wildfires.

Epidemiologist Eva Hawes also described the county’s school reopening status as part of the board’s briefing. [State requirements for resuming in-person instruction](#) in any form call for data measured for three weeks in a row where the county showed 10 or fewer cases per 100,000 people over seven days and test positivity of 5% or less over seven days. In addition, statewide metrics for three weeks in a row must show test positivity of 5% or less over seven days. Although the state suspended the statewide measure for case positivity for much of September due to wildfires and smoke events, Washington County still does not meet the in-person education requirements for counties.

A statewide exemption for kindergarten-through-third-grader schooling would allow for limited in-person education if cases were below 30 per 100,000 population.

“Our case counts are over that threshold for the youngest learners, that K through 3, of meeting the 30-per-100,000 metric,” said Hawes. “So we were close at the beginning of September and are above that again.”

The board first declared an emergency on March 4, just after the county’s first case of COVID-19 was discovered.

The county’s emergency operations center (EOC), which also activated soon after the first case of new coronavirus was reported, has since demobilized after nearly six months of operation. The coordinating center served to support public health operations and to help organize the multi-agency response to the outbreak. Hundreds of staff and representatives from several community partners contributed to the unified response through the work of the EOC.

The functions of the EOC are now being performed through teams of county personnel, including those in the county’s Office of Emergency Management, Public Health Division and others.

The public is reminded to follow [Governor Kate Brown’s statewide orders for limiting the spread of the virus](#) and recommendations from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). These simple steps can save lives by slowing the spread of COVID-19:

- Follow [the statewide requirement to wear a face covering](#) when in indoor public spaces and outdoors when six feet of distance cannot be maintained. This requirement does not apply to children under five, and to people with a medical condition or disability that prevents them from wearing a face covering.
- Wash your hands often with warm running water and soap for 20-seconds.
- If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand wash product.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes using your sleeve or a tissue, not your bare hand.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Stay home and away from the rest of your household if you’re feeling sick. Additional home guidance is [here](#).
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Get a flu shot. More information about where to get a flu shot is available at [VaccineFinder.org](#).
- Clean and disinfect objects and surfaces that are frequently touched surfaces at home and at work, including your mobile devices.
- Follow the governor’s [Safe and Strong Oregon orders](#).
- Pregnant women should [visit the CDC's website](#) for the most current guidance.
- Breastfeeding women should visit [Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine](#) for the most current guidance.

Health officials also ask that the public stay informed and educated through trustworthy sources of information, such as the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), [Oregon Health Authority](#) and [Washington County Public Health Division](#).

General questions about COVID-19 can be answered by [calling 2-1-1](#). Questions about your specific medical needs should be directed to your health care provider.

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