Governor DeWine Calls on Ohioans to Recommit to Safety Practices, Announces New Mask, Social Distancing Orders

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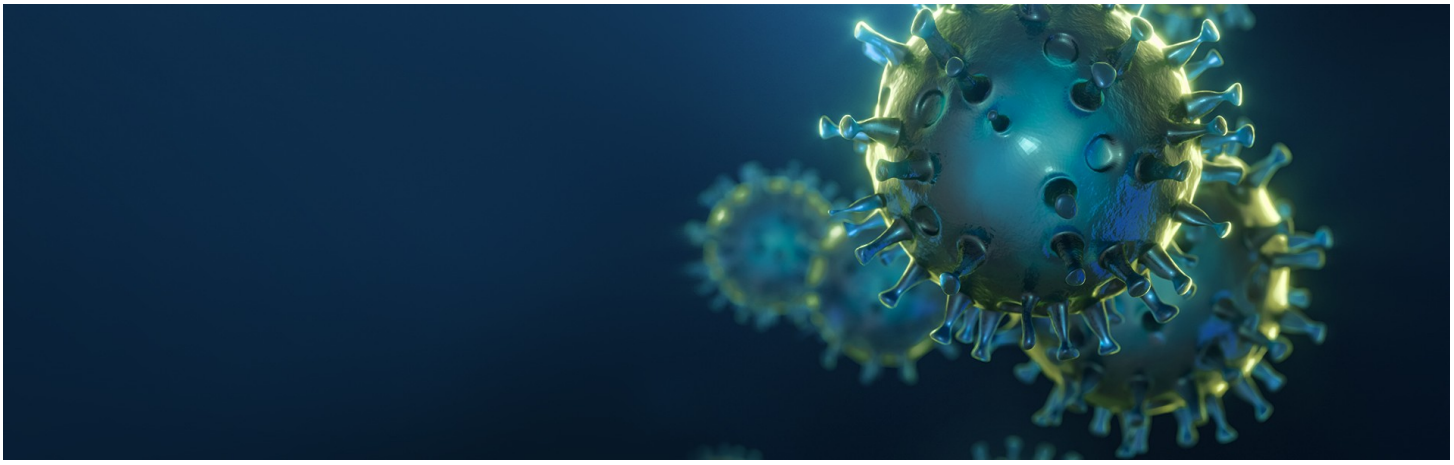

(COLUMBUS, Ohio)— In a statewide address to Ohioans Wednesday evening, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine called on citizens to recommit to their individual efforts to prevent coronavirus spread as Ohio moves through its most intense, widespread, and dangerous surge of cases to date.

Ohio is currently facing a record number of coronavirus-related hospitalizations and intensive care admissions, with nearly 3,000 people in the hospital, including more than 700 people in the ICU. During the first week of November alone, 104 Ohioans infected with the coronavirus died.

“With this new wave of COVID-19, the onset of flu season, and an already-exhausted group of healthcare workers, there are serious concerns that there won’t be enough people to fully staff our healthcare facilities in the next few weeks,” said Governor DeWine. “If we don’t change this, Ohio won’t be able to provide appropriate care for COVID patients or for Ohioans who require other emergency care for things like accidents, strokes, and heart attacks. Hospitals will again be forced to postpone important, but less urgent, care.”

Although testing capacity in Ohio has nearly doubled, the number of people testing positive for the coronavirus has increased almost four times. At the end of September, Ohio averaged under 1,000 new cases per day; this week, Ohio hit a record high of more than 6,500 new cases reported in a single 24-hour period.

“As we wait for the vaccine, which could come as soon as December, we have so much to protect,” said Governor DeWine. “What each Ohioan does in his or her own life impacts every citizen and every place we desperately want and need to keep open– our schools, nursing homes, hospitals, and businesses.”

To reinforce the necessity of wearing masks and slowing virus spread, Governor DeWine announced two forthcoming orders:

Revised Mask Order

Although most people and businesses have properly followed COVID-19 safety guidelines issued in Ohio’s July 23, 2020, mask order, others are not following the order.

To protect frontline workers and customers, the Ohio Department of Health will reissue Ohio’s mask order and add the following provisions:

- Each store will be required to post a sign outlining face-covering requirements at all public entrances to the store;
- Each store will be responsible for ensuring that customers and employees are wearing masks; and
- A new Retail Compliance Unit, comprised of agents led by the Ohio Bureau of Workers’ Compensation, will inspect to ensure compliance. A first violation will result in a written warning and a second violation will result in closure of the store for up to 24 hours.

New Social Gathering Order

Ohio’s April order that limits public events and private gatherings of more than 10 people is still in effect, however, there has been rampant spread of the virus as a result of banquets, wedding receptions, and social gatherings following funerals.

To address the tragedies that have resulted from such events, the Ohio Department of Health will issue an order that will place significant new restrictions on these social activities. Specifically, open congregate areas will no longer be permitted to open, and everyone will be required to be seated and masked unless they are actively consuming food or drinks.

Bars, restaurants, and fitness centers may remain open, but this will be reassessed one week from tomorrow for potential closure.

“If the current trend continues and cases keep increasing, we will be forced to make these closures,” said Governor DeWine. “I am very well aware of the burden this will place on employees and owners, but these are places where it is difficult or impossible to maintain mask-wearing, which we know now is the chief way of slowing this virus.”

For Governor DeWine’s entire address, visit ohiochannel.org or read his prepared remarks at coronavirus.ohio.gov.