Burgum releases guidelines for large gatherings, events as part of ND Smart Restart plan

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BISMARCK, N.D. – Gov. Doug Burgum today announced guidelines for large gatherings, banquets, ballrooms and event venues as part of the ND Smart Restart plan, while also outlining the plan as a phased approach to recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The North Dakota Department of Commerce worked with more than a dozen representatives of business and industry to collaboratively develop the recommendations for the ND Smart Restart of event centers and other venues in collaboration with the North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH).

"Thanks to the contribution of this diverse workgroup, these recommended protocols balance the importance of controlling the spread of infection with the ability to safely proceed with events of limited size with additional precautions," Burgum said. "These protocols empower local decision-making as our state's COVID-19 response continues to focus on our ability to test, trace and isolate positive cases to save lives and livelihoods."

Under the recommendations, large gatherings in facilities can be up to 50 percent of their certificate of occupancy, up to 250 people. Gatherings of any size shouldn't be held if proper distancing can't be maintained. Food service still must comply with the ND Smart Restart restaurant and universal standard protocols found at ndresponse.gov. The recommendations also include physical distancing guidelines and venue activity guidelines such as encouraging contactless payment systems.

The governor amended an executive order to strongly encourage the adoption of the large gathering protocols by recreational and sports arenas and music and entertainment venues, which had been closed under the previous order.

The guidance includes recommendations for holding events larger than 250 people when the state reaches reduced risk levels as defined under the ND Smart Restart plan, which was outlined by Burgum today.

The ND Smart Restart was developed with input from statewide industry workgroups and prepared by the NDDoH and the Department of Commerce in conjunction with the Governor's Office. It provides North Dakota businesses and residents with clarity and specifics about the state's plan, including a color-coded health guidance system for economic reactivation – similar to the fire danger signs seen along the state's roadways – with health guidance inspired by the White House's gating criteria for reopening. The plan also includes specific instructions for high-risk populations.

"By continuing to follow public health guidance and exercise individual responsibility, every North Dakotan can play an important role in saving lives and livelihoods and fully reactivating our economy," Burgum said.

The NDDoH today confirmed 52 additional cases of COVID-19 out of 2,310 total tests conducted, which included 1,404 newly tested North Dakotans. With 64 newly recovered cases, the number of active cases decreased to 648. The state has seen 1,071 recovered cases and 42 deaths of individuals with COVID-19, including two deaths reported today. Thirty-five people are hospitalized.

For more information on the state's COVID-19 response, visit www.health.nd.gov/coronavirus or www.ndresponse.gov.

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