Gov. announces renewed public health regulations, reiterates that more will come if alarming rise of COVID-19 is not slowed

October 13, 2020 - 2019 Novel Coronavirus - Alert

Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham on Tuesday announced the state of New Mexico will implement, and in some cases re-implement, several public health regulations later in the week to stem the alarming rise of COVID-19 illnesses statewide.

The governor also reiterated her stark warnings from recent weeks – as COVID-19 infections have spread rapidly throughout all regions of the state, including an increase in

COVID-19 hospitalizations – that New Mexico may in the near future be compelled to re-enact even more stringent public health controls to blunt the spread of the highly infectious and potentially lethal virus, which has already killed almost 1,000 New Mexicans.

"*Without a vaccine, we have only a few tools against this awful, invisible enemy,*" said Gov. Lujan Grisham. "*We must wear our masks. We must avoid large groups of people. We must limit our travel outside of the home, particularly our time in enclosed indoor spaces. When we do these things, we can crush the virus, and we protect our families, our communities and our state from being overrun by illness. But the virus is booming in New Mexico right now. The increases we've seen here are some of the worst in the entire United States this fall. This kind of overwhelming and dramatic statewide spread signals one thing: Too many of us, succumbing to COVID fatigue, are no longer using those tools. We're no longer taking those precautions. We are giving the virus too many opportunities to spread. And the enemy is taking advantage.*

"*When the community spread of the virus becomes uncontrollable – and we are fast approaching that point – our only option is to simply shut down those opportunities for the virus. We've made so much progress to sustain reopenings and our limited, safe in-person learning efforts – but that progress is rapidly disappearing. Rollbacks will mean more economic turmoil for so many workers and business owners in our state who have already suffered and sacrificed so much. But it is our only chance to prevent more devastating illness and to save lives. No one wants to come to that point. I detest the very thought of it. We have got to turn it around and fast. So I once again urge, with my whole heart, that New Mexicans in every corner of the state, city leaders, county leaders, business leaders, community leaders all take up the mantle of fighting this invisible*

enemy, of requiring and encouraging safe behavior, of asking more of ourselves to protect New Mexico. The crisis is not over. The virus is still with us. Let's step it up, all together, once again."

The state has missed its reopening gating criteria – a measure of the spread of the virus that signals whether additional day-to-day activity is safe and can be permitted – for several weeks. Absent an improvement in those data, the state of New Mexico will once again restrict indoor dining service and significantly roll back maximum occupancy allowances at other retail and dining establishments.

The state's operative emergency public health order will expire Friday, Oct. 16; it will be extended, with amendments.

The governor and state health officials will, effective Friday, Oct. 16, append the following changes to the public health order and associated public health guidance documents:

TEMPORARY CLOSING TIME

Any food or drink establishment in New Mexico serving alcohol must close at 10:00 p.m. each night. The governor's Economic Recovery Council, which has advised her administration on re-opening strategies to strengthen and sustain the state's workforce and economy through this crisis, made the recommendation for this mandatory closing time.

"*New Mexico hotels and restaurants and our hospitality employees have suffered more from COVID than any other sector,*" said Allan Affeldt, hotel and restaurant owner and member of the Economic Recovery Council. "*In spite of that, the overwhelming majority of hotels and restaurants are in support of the state's COVID-Safe Practices and are doing our best to keep our guests and staff safe so our economy can recover faster. Unfortunately, there are some restaurants and bars that blatantly disregard public safety by operating late and in gross violation of safe practices and*

common sense. These business owners threaten the survival of all businesses in the state and the health of their customers and staff. These problems nearly all occur after hours, when some restaurants are simply acting as bars, where spread of the virus is not inhibited. Because of this, I and many of my fellow hotel and restaurant operators are in full support of a temporary limit on operating hours for late-night restaurants and bars. Together we can get all New Mexico businesses open sooner if we take these simple steps to help limit viral spread."

Other states – including Kentucky, Ohio, South Carolina and Washington – have enacted similar closing times for places of business selling alcohol in order to slow the spread of COVID-19 in those establishments. The state, which issues liquor and restaurant licenses to food and drink establishments, will rigorously enforce this requirement.

HOTEL OCCUPANCY

Maximum occupancy restrictions will be reduced to 60 percent for places of lodging that have completed the N.M. Safe Certified training program and to 25 percent for places of lodging that have not completed the training program – a reduction of maximum occupancy from 75 percent and 50 percent, respectively.

QUARANTINE

The governor will amend her executive order that requires a period of mandatory self-quarantine for individuals arriving into New Mexico from out of state. Individuals arriving from "*higher-risk states,*" or those with a test positivity rate exceeding 5 percent and a test positivity rate higher than 80 per 100,000 residents, will no longer be exempt from the period of mandatory self-quarantine if they test negative for COVID-19 within 72 hours of their arrival into New Mexico. All individuals arriving from those higher-risk states – a list of which is updated each Wednesday at COVID

Recommendations – must self-quarantine for a period of no less than 14 days or for the duration of their stay in New Mexico, whichever is shorter.

MASS GATHERINGS

Mass gatherings of more than 5 individuals are once again prohibited. Previously the state had allowed gatherings of more than 10 individuals. A "*mass gathering*" is defined as any public or private gathering, organized event, ceremony, parade, organized amateur contact sport, or other grouping that brings together individuals in an indoor or outdoor space.

The governor and state health officials are scheduled to discuss the extended public health order and other COVID-19 data in the state's regular COVID-19 public update Thursday; additional details about that event will be disseminated later this week.

Media Contact

We would be happy to provide additional information about this press release. Simply contact David Morgan at 575-528-5197 (Office) or 575-649-0754 (Mobile) with your questions.

Versión en Español

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Gobernadora anuncia renovación en las reglas de salud pública, reitera que más vendrán si el aumento alarmante por COVID-19 no es detenido