



COVID-19 Updates from the City Manager

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COVID-19 infections and deaths are rising sharply in the United States as people gather indoors more with colder weather. Nationwide, we are averaging more than 170,000 new cases per day. Two weeks ago, 57,000 Americans were hospitalized, now 88,000 are in the hospital.

In just over three weeks in November, Yakima County erased all of the reductions we had made in infection and hospitalization rates since the end of July. As of November 24th, Yakima County reported 14,699 COVID-19 cases – adding more than 900 new cases in seven days, our second highest weekly rate ever. Hospitalizations have more than doubled from October. In the past two weeks, eleven more County residents have died, for a total of 259 deaths.

COVID-19 affects all of us. In recent weeks, a handful of City employees from different departments have reported potential COVID-19 illnesses or exposures from contacts outside the workplace. All isolated while awaiting their test results. Fortunately, only one tested positive, but we did have to close that program for this week. We disinfected the affected facilities. We are well stocked with masks, gloves, sanitizer and other protective gear. These circumstances remind us that every employer is at risk of having to reduce services or even close because of COVID-19.

The Yakima Health District (YHD) is partnering with the City and Comprehensive Health Services to set up a community testing site at the Sunnyside Community Center, smaller but similar to the one at State Fair Park. We are finalizing arrangements, and the partners expect to announce detailed plans soon.

Promising vaccines are in development and may be ready in just a few more months. While awaiting that day, let's remain steadfast in our efforts to slow the spread of COVID-19:

- *Wear a face mask consistently.*
- *Stay at least 6 feet apart from others.*
- *Limit gatherings with people who do not live with you.*
- *Wash your hands and sanitize surfaces often.*

We know these are not perfect solutions; they significantly reduce your risks of infection, but they do not eliminate them. Even so, health officials advise they are the best tools we have until safe and effective vaccines become widely available.

Thank you!