

Be cautious this holiday season

November 26, 2020



Just to keep everyone in the loop, we continued to have high case numbers last week, and through the weekend. The disease movement has picked up quite dramatically for us, and the workload of reaching out to cases has increased as well. We have asked for state support for case investigation and contact tracing, and we anticipate that we will get some assistance within a few weeks.

We thought it was important to let people know this, as we have long maintained all our case work for COVID with our own people, and were proud of the fact that our own Del Norte staff would be calling people when needed, but right now there is too much to do and the support from the state health staff is available.

We also want to let people know what we are seeing locally, in terms of where we see cases and also give advice about what to do in a time of relative shortages. We have had a lot of reports of people going to work sick with cold and flu symptoms, and many have turned positive for COVID, but sometimes days after they were first having symptoms. We cannot stress this enough; do not go to work or school if you are sick! It is the most fundamental rule, and something we have been talking about since the very first bulletin we posted, way back in February.

If you are sick, stay home, and if there is a chance that it is COVID, stay home and keep yourself isolated until you get an answer about a test result. Get tested when you can and presume that you are positive unless a test shows otherwise, and act as if you are positive, which means stay home, and isolate yourself. That is absolutely the best way to slow the virus down, and to keep your friends and family safe. For most people, the isolation period is only 10 days (timed from the day your symptoms started) and if you get tested any time during that period, it will be enough to confirm having the disease.

Testing demand has risen quite a bit, but sites are still available. The Verily test site has moved to the cultural center, which is easier in bad weather, because for the protected drive-through at the front door. People should be aware that result reporting may take more than a few days in some cases and to not depend on results to assure that you are safe for travel or gatherings. By the time you get a result, you may have reached your destination and if you are positive for the virus you may have infected many people. Traveling itself is much riskier than it has been all summer, and holiday traveling is being discouraged at all levels. Furthermore, the state health department indicated modification to their gatherings guidance, to now state no more than 12 persons in a family gathering, and again, stressing the importance of wearing masks, conducting the gathering outdoors as much as possible and spreading out to create a safe distance during a meal.

We also agree that gatherings in homes or among friends are the main source, by far, of the recent cases, many of which have been linked to parties, but it is certainly not the only type of story. Friends just sharing space, thinking they are safe, have created quite a few cases recently. The other main source has been workplaces, especially those where lots of employees are working in a shared space. It is critical that people have the ability to wear masks indoors and space themselves from coworkers. Even schools are affected, as the state updated the mask guidance last week, and now even children are expected to wear masks in public places. We expect that the school guidelines will be modified to reflect this as well.

Lastly, we think it would be wise to prepare to move to the Purple Tier (Tier 1) which is the most restrictive and will mean a lot of businesses will need to modify their workplaces quite a bit. We expect a formal posting on the state website, and by the time most Del Norte's see this bulletin, it may be old news, but we know our numbers, and they mean a tier change. We had over 50 cases during the last week, not including the weekend, when we took on about 20 more. All we need to move to purple is 35 cases in a week.

Purple Tier means a lot of business goes to outside status only, and many things would need to change in other venues as well. The new rules also require affected businesses to change their operation within 24 hours of the announcement. We know this is a heavy lift, but we are definitely headed in the wrong direction, and it is prudent to take precautions wherever we can.

For information about how to isolate or quarantine, we have links at our public health website. For information about the tiers and what is allowed or not, go to <https://covid19.ca.gov/safer-economy/>

Everyone stay safe and we hope you have a Happy Thanksgiving!

