
Guest Commentary: Stay safe so we can stop spread of COVID-19

November 23, 2020

By now, most of you who have been following the COVID developments in our county have realized that we have seen a big (for us) jump in case counts, with over 50 cases in about two weeks. If you are really following local events, you know that cases in the surrounding counties have also picked up quite a bit. Pretty much everywhere in California there is an increase, not as dramatic compared to some parts of the nation, but definitely a change from where we were a month or two ago. Lastly because of all of this, as of yesterday our county moved into a more restrictive tier, the Red Tier.

I think that it is safe to say that the fall surge that was predicted is happening, and in some places around the country, it is becoming alarming. We are not immune to this effect, and no longer is any part of our region of California. Two of the three closest counties to us have moved even further, with a drop to the Purple Tier (the most restrictive), and even Modoc County, one of the last places in the state to record its first case of COVID-19 this summer, has moved to Red Tier as well. We should expect to see even more activity before we see less, and we should expect this to continue for some time to come.

Our local landscape could change in a way that we have not seen yet with this virus. It's kind of a sobering thought, or it should be.

So, more than ever, we should dial back what we have been doing. We know that it is a hard message to hear, but the majority of the recent cases are related to workplace or after work exposure and family contacts with parties and gatherings, with these categories combined accounting for about 90% of recent cases. Too many people have relaxed the rules a bit too much at their workplace, or are spending too much time with friends and coworkers and not taking precautions. The consequences are the numbers we are seeing for these last few weeks. It is not a good trend, and sooner or later it will start to impact our medical system. We need to remember that there are two reasons that we are so cautious with this virus, the first is the risk to the most vulnerable, and the second is the risk to the medical care system that we all depend on to save lives when lives need saving.

For those businesses that have their activity tied to tiers, we strongly recommend that you check what happens for your particular business in the Red (Tier 2) level. For those out there in our community who have been lax with wearing masks or enforcing that and other rules about COVID 19, now is a good time to reconsider. We don't want to point fingers at anyone, and this is not a blame game, but if we want to at least

keep where we are, or get back to where we were as fast as possible, we need to do better, or at least some of us need to.

We know that wearing face masks has been controversial, but the evidence has grown immensely about the benefits of doing this simple thing. The CDC consensus is that the benefits are well worth the effort in terms of case counts and deaths. Wearing masks benefit both the wearer and the community.

Breathing is a two way process, and the mask blocks in both directions. Not 100%, no, but it is just common sense that even 50% blockage is a lot better than none. All the studies and analysis really boils down to that simple, common sense conclusion (for those that want to dig further into this question, the link to the CDC summary is provided below). We need to get more people wearing masks both in the workplace and out, and especially at home. With holidays coming this last point is especially true. There is just no getting around it; if we can't do a better job, we will probably join the rest of the state and nation, and have worse restrictions to cope with. I don't think any of us want to see that happen.

So with that in mind, we suggest to all who can, to go back to that shelter-in-place way of life that we all endured back in March and April. This is not a health order or a mandate, but we think that it is so important to get back ahead of this virus, that it would be wrong to not mention this. We just need people to take better precautions, and cut down on unnecessary and unwise contacts with each other, because over and over we are hearing stories of exactly that. Most importantly, if you are high risk, you need to think of yourself as living in an unsafe zone now, wherever you go in our county. Stay home!

Stay safe! Don't take any chances with this virus if you don't have to, you will help yourself, your family and your community.

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