



"Health begins where you live, learn, work, and play."

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

LEADVILLE/LAKE COUNTY

(LEADVILLE, COLO, October 26, 2020) – Lake County Public Health Agency COVID updates

Lake County Public Health Agency (LCPHA) was able to gain an extension of time from Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) for Lake County's possible movement into CDPHE's "Orange - High Risk" category of the Safer-At-Home public health order dial framework. The state will now make the decision on Lake County's status on Monday, November 2nd.

Colleen Nielsen, LCPHA Director, consulted with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment today, Monday, October 26. Nielsen successfully made the case that, while Lake County's COVID infection rates have exceeded the allowable threshold for the state's "Safer-At-Home - Level 2 - Concern" level, Lake County has still been able to manage the spike. Because many of the recent positive cases are associated with family clusters rather than diffuse community spread and LCPHA is still able to complete thorough contact tracing for each case, CDPHE agreed to extend Lake County additional days to attempt to mitigate increasing positivity rate in the county.

LCPHA, along with the Board of County Commissioners and City of Leadville mayor, will be meeting again with CDPHE on Monday, November 2, to evaluate whether Lake County will be able to remain in the "Yellow - Concern" level it has been in since September 15, 2020. If Lake County's positivity rate has not decreased markedly by next week, it is likely CDPHE will require the county to move into the more restrictive "Safer At Home - Level 3 - High Risk" level within the CDPHE dial framework. LCPHA will inform the community of this status as soon as CDPHE make its determination.

LCPHA was also able to amend the county-level public health order today to adopt industry guidelines that align with the current CDPHE state-level public health order. While movement into the "Orange - High Risk" category would still require further reductions in some business operations, this amendment does allow for greater flexibility for many sectors, including restaurants, schools, places of worship, and some events than permitted in the prior order. The new Lake County guidance document for the updated dial

categories and associated industry impacts can be found at <https://www.LakeCountyOEM.org/levels> and the amended public health order can be found at <https://www.LakeCountyOEM.org/covid-19>.

Lake County currently does have acute care bed capacity at its St Vincent Health (SVH) facility. However, the out-of-county hospitals to which critical patients are commonly transferred for higher levels of care are not currently accepting transfers from outside hospitals due to inadequate critical care capacity.

“It is less about our immediate local capacity and more about the strain on the entire critical care system in the state. It does not help to have capacity in Leadville if our residents cannot get the care they need if they require transfer,” said Dr. Lisa Zwerdinger, LCPHA Medical Officer and SVH’s Chief Medical Officer.

Nielsen reinforces that despite the temporary allowance CDPHE offered today, Lake County is not in the clear yet, saying “CDPHE has flagged us as ‘In Mitigation,’ and if we cannot reverse our trend, we will certainly end up with greater restrictions mandated by CDPHE very soon. We all need to recommit to the precautions we know help reduce infection spread: wearing face coverings, maintaining physical distance, keeping gathering sizes small, staying home when sick. In order to keep Lake County operating, we all must take this seriously, especially during the upcoming holidays like Halloween and Thanksgiving. Otherwise, Lake County risks moving backwards again.”

LCPHA is hosting two virtual Town Halls this week to share COVID updates and address questions:

- Business-Focused Updates: Wednesday, October 28th at 5:00p. Join via zoom or phone at <https://zoom.us/j/98530508830>, passcode 454767, or 1-669-900-6833, meeting ID 985 3050 8830.
- General Community: Wednesday, October 28th at 6:00p. Join via zoom or phone at <https://zoom.us/j/93264409303> or 1-669-900-6833, meeting ID 932 6440 9303.

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