

## New Mexico hits the reset button

Written by By Dominic Aragon For the Sun  
Thursday, 26 November 2020 09:57

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## NON-ESSENTIAL BUSINESSES CLOSE IN-PERSON SERVICES FOR TWO WEEKS

SANTA FE — During her Nov. 13 press conference, Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham laid out a plan to close certain businesses for two weeks starting Nov. 16.

The governor said businesses deemed “non-essential,” and nonprofits, are required to cease in-person services until Nov. 30.

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Non-essential businesses include barbershops, salons, and gyms. Food and drink establishments have been instructed to halt on-site dining, but can offer curbside and delivery services.

Houses of worship can operate at either 25 percent of the maximum occupancy or 75 people at any time, whichever number is smaller. Lujan Grisham said New Mexicans are instructed to shelter in place and only leave home for trips pertaining to health, safety and welfare.

“New Mexico has crushed this virus twice, and we’ll do it again,” she said.

### **OUTLOOK**

After Nov. 30, the state will have a three-tier county-by-county system to establish reopening benchmarks for individual counties.

“We feel very confident about this aspect of having the whole state, county-by-county working cohesively to continue to blunt the spread of the virus,” the governor said.

Level 1 (green) would be a county with low positivity rates and low daily case counts.

Level 2 (yellow) would be a county that has borderline positivity rates and average daily case counts that would require public health restrictions.

Level 3 (red) would mean a county has widespread illness and infection, restricting in-person activity.

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“This permits counties the flexibility to engage more directly in both problem solving and rewarding by showing they have found strategies to mitigate risk,” Lujan Grisham said.

### ***NO CHANGES TO SCHOOLS***

In a Nov. 16 news conference, New Mexico Public Education Department Secretary Dr. Ryan Stewart said the next two weeks are critical in getting case numbers lower and having the option of having the hybrid model available to public school districts.

As of Nov. 16, the PED said over 1,000 students and 1,100 staff members have reported positive COVID-19 cases.

“Let’s be very clear, if we don’t start to trend in the right direction, if we don’t start to get these case numbers down, get our positivity rates down, then we will be in a situation where we’ll have no choice but to move all schools into remote learning,” Stewart said.

Additionally, the PED said around 12,000 of the 330,000 students enrolled are not accounted for on public school rosters.

At this time, only kindergarten through sixth grade students are allowed to return to the classroom in-person via hybrid models.

Stewart did not give a timetable as to when grades 7-12 can return in a hybrid model.

“Unfortunately, with this latest surge we’ve seen, it really has put on pause, our ability to engage in those kinds of conversations about middle school and high school. Much of the timing around that will be dictated by how well we do in the next two weeks and beyond, in terms of getting back on the right trajectory,” Stewart told the *Gallup Sun*.

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### ***BY THE NUMBERS***

The state has seen over 60,000 COVID-19 cases as of Nov. 12.

The state reported 1,753 cases on Nov. 12, which is the highest number of cases in a 24-hour period in New Mexico.

Additionally, the state reported 182 COVID-19 deaths in the last two weeks, bringing the total to 1,176 deaths.

Locally, McKinley County and neighboring Cibola County have reported over 5,100 and 900 total cases respectively.

### ***RESET RESTRICTIONS TIGHTENED NOV. 18***

The governor is clarifying the intent of her emergency public health order.

The changes restrict “big box” stores and other large retailers from operating in-person services.

These changes began Nov. 19. Many of them follow:

Essential retailers include: grocery stores, supermarkets, food banks, farmers’ markets and vendors who sell food, convenience stores, and other businesses that generate more than one-third of their revenue from the sale of canned food, dry goods, fresh fruits and vegetables, pet food, animal feed or supplies, fresh meats, fish, and poultry, and any other consumable food and drink products;

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They also include automobile repair facilities, bike repair facilities, and retailers who generate the majority of their revenue from the sale of automobile or bike repair products; hardware stores; laundromats and dry cleaner services.

These essential businesses may continue to operate but must reduce operations and staff. They may have no more than 75 customers inside or exceed 25 percent of maximum occupancy at any time, whichever is smaller; and must close by 10 pm each night.

Under this amended definition, “big box” stores and other large retailers that do not generate more than one-third of their revenue from the above identified food and drink products may not operate in-person services.

In other words a “big box” or large retail space such as Hobby Lobby and Ross Dress for Less is not permitted to operate in-person services under the above identified stipulations.

Businesses that are not identified as “essential” may operate to the minimum extent necessary to provide curbside pickup and/or delivery of goods to customers.

Animal grooming services may not operate.

Plant nurseries and Christmas tree lots “may operate to the minimum extent necessary to provide curbside pickup and/or delivery services to customers.”

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For the Sun***