

Hotspot businesses to be temporarily closed; retail hours limited; safety requirements for food and drink establishments enhanced

SANTA FE – The state of New Mexico’s amended emergency public health order is in effect as of Oct. 23.

Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham and state health and workplace safety officials earlier this week detailed new enhanced mitigation efforts to crack down on COVID-19 throughout New Mexico, a targeted and moderated approach that is intended to break the chain of escalating statewide infections and prevent the virus from overwhelming state hospitals without enacting wholesale business closings.

The state’s newest mitigation efforts include an enhanced strategy for enforcing safety requirements at food and drink establishments offering limited indoor-dining options, a targeting of higher-risk hotspot places of business reporting clusters of infections and a statewide mandatory closing time for retail entities among other measures.

The amended public health order, effective through Nov. 13, incorporates the following amendments intended to root out and prevent the incidence and spread of COVID-19 at locations identified as sources of possible exposure:

- Businesses that incur four rapid responses – [which occur when an employer reports, as required, an incidence of COVID-19 in the workplace to the state Environment Department, which oversees state occupational health and safety efforts](#)
– over a two-week period will be required to close for two weeks.

- This closure requirement will apply to food and drink establishments, close-contact businesses, retail spaces and places of lodging.

- All retail establishments must close by 10 pm each night, in alignment with the state’s requirement that food and drink establishments serving alcohol must close by 10 pm.
- Retail establishments [are defined in the public health order](#) as businesses selling goods or services directly to a customer and include grocery stores and “big box” stores.

- Food and drink establishments that complete the [New Mexico Safe Certification training program](#), which educates workers about the state’s required and recommended COVID-Safe Practices, may continue to offer limited indoor dining at a maximum of 25 percent occupancy as of Oct. 30. Food and drink establishments that are not New Mexico Safe Certified as of Oct. 30 may continue to provide outdoor dine-in service at 75 percent of maximum occupancy [with tables at least six feet apart among other required COVID-Safe Practices](#) but may not provide indoor dine-in service.

- Restaurants wishing to continue limited indoor dining must consent, as part of the certification program, to spot testing of employees by the state Department of Health. The

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Written by gallupsun

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Department of Health will prioritize spot-testing for establishments in high-risk counties where the spread of the virus is greatest.

- Restaurants wishing to continue limited indoor dining must require customers who dine on-site to list their name and contact information in a logbook, and retain the information for no less than three weeks, to assist state regulators in contact-tracing efforts. Previously, this contribution to contact-tracing efforts was only recommended as part of [the state's COVID-Safe Practices](#)

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The state has also closed state museums and historical sites.

The new mitigation efforts are supplemental to [the state's most recent enhanced regulations](#) , which include a mandatory nightly closing time for food and drink establishments serving alcohol, a tighter limit on the number of people who may gather in one place and a reduced maximum occupancy for hotels and other places of lodging as a result of contact tracing identifying out-of-state travel as a top source of possible exposure.

Maximum occupancy restrictions remain in place for businesses and different industries and in-person entities statewide, as does the statewide requirement that all individuals wear facemasks in public.

“Please stay home,” Lujan Grisham said. “Please, when you must go out, wear a mask, and avoid groups. Shop alone – don’t bring the whole family. Over the next week, two weeks, three weeks, please be extremely conservative in deciding how much time to spend outside of the home. The visit to friends can wait – it’s not worth your life, or theirs. The visit to family can wait – it’s not worth your life, or theirs. Take care and take caution, and we will successfully protect our hospitals and health care workers.”

