

Governor announces new business regulations

Written by By Dominic Aragon Sun Correspondent
Friday, 30 October 2020 02:47



Schools continue to operate using hybrid models

SANTA FE — Governor Michelle Lujan-Grisham announced changes to the current public health order in a news conference Oct. 20.

Among the changes, food and drink establishments will be able to offer indoor dining to a maximum of 25 percent occupancy.

The food and drink businesses will have to consent to spot testing of employees.

“If you don’t complete the New Mexico Safe Certification program ... you cannot continue to offer indoor dining at 25 percent,” the governor said.

The businesses will have until the end of the month to complete the certification.

Additionally, to aid in contact tracing, food and drink establishments will have to keep a logbook of all customers who dine on-site for three weeks.

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The new changes will go into effect Oct. 23.

BY THE NUMBERS

COVID-19 cases are on the rise across New Mexico, with 599 new cases reported on Oct. 20. The total count of positive cases is nearly 38,000.

Locally, the governor's office reports that McKinley County has seen 4,492 total cases. Neighboring Cibola County hit the 500-mark of confirmed cases the same day.

The state reported a single-day record of 819 new COVID-19 cases on Oct. 16.

Overall, Bernalillo County leads the state's 33 counties with over 9,200 cases.

OTHER CHANGES

Museums and historical sites operated by the state will close Oct. 23. A date for reopening was not mentioned.

All retail locations will have to close by 10 pm nightly.

Businesses will be added to the Environment Department's watch list if they report two rapid responses to the state in a 14-day period. Rapid responses occur when an employer reports an incidence of COVID-19 in the workplace.

If a business has four such responses in the 14-day period, it will have to close for two weeks.

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The order applies to restaurants, retail spaces, lodging and places of business that have close contact like gyms and salons.

“We believe this one effort is significant enough that we will be focusing on locations and high risk communities so that we can get folks back to managing the virus and limiting the spread,” the governor said.

The Spread

The rate of COVID-19 spread in New Mexico is one of the highest in the United States, Dr. David Scrase said.

“We’re seeing 26 counties reporting new cases every single day which is another indication that spread is actually widespread throughout the state,” Scrase added.

Scrase said the 18-to-34 age group is seeing the largest number of cases per day.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS EXEMPT

In an Oct. 16 news conference, New Mexico Public Education Department Secretary Dr. Ryan Stewart said schools who were currently operating in a hybrid model, are exempt from the Oct. 16 public health order, limiting groups to five people.

The PED, Governor’s Office and the Department of Health said they are continuing to review data and will make determinations based on the spread of COVID-19.

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“Right now, we have not set a timetable on schools having to close. We’re working with DOH to determine if they feel like we’ve reached a point where we think we need to do that, we will solidify that shortly and be able to come back to you,” Stewart told *The Gallup Sun*.

“We will continue with our rapid response process as cases are identified.”

By Dominic Aragon
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