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Coconino County Returns to more Restrictive Phase I Operations as COVID-19 Cases Rise

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. – On June 5, 2020, the Coconino County Board of Supervisors approved a COVID-19 Re-Entry Plan for County Operations. The plan provides guidance to protect customer and employee health and safety.

Coconino County COVID-19 case numbers have followed an upward trajectory over the past several weeks. Based on this increase, and in alignment with the County's Re-Entry Plan, effective Monday, November 23 Coconino County will return to more restrictive Phase I operations, summarized below.

- County buildings will be closed to the public for in-person business, with the exception of essential services conducted in-person on an appointment basis.
- County employees shall practice outlined COVID-19 prevention practices including proper hand washing and physical distancing.
- County employees and visitors shall wear masks in public areas of all County Buildings, following County issued mask donning and doffing protocol. The masks will be provided when needed.
- Remote work will continue in order to minimize face to face interactions across County departments.
- No more than one third of all County employees will work onsite.
- County hours of operations may be modified to accommodate remote working arrangements and enhanced cleaning operations.

As the Coconino County Re-Entry Plan states, the phases are to be implemented incrementally, pending achieving the identified benchmarks and the reduction of positive COVID-19 cases, as well as the ability to accommodate physical distancing and other mitigation practices. The plan further indicates that when conditions change in such a way that these standards cannot be met, County operations may revert from a less restrictive phase to a more restrictive one.

COVID-19 community transmission levels are determined using metrics defined by the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) including incidence rate, percent positivity and COVID-like illness (CLI). Based on the three defined community transmission levels, a classification of Minimal, Moderate or Substantial is determined and provides direction on safe business and school operations.

Although Coconino County's community transmission classification is Moderate based on the ADHS Benchmarks, the County has an incidence rate of 337.3 per 100,000, three times the threshold established by ADHS, and a percent positivity of 10.2% placing these metrics well

within the Substantial transmission category. This is the second consecutive week of both case rate and percent positivity being in the Substantial categories. The CLI incidence rate is technically within the Moderate category reporting at 5.0%. However, the CLI metric is underrepresented as the majority of Coconino County hospitals are not participating in the ADHS syndromic surveillance system that collects data for CLI. The County has requested that ADHS establish benchmarks that reflect available data. In the absence of a remedy and in effort to provide swift action to promote public safety, the County has determined moving to Phase I is the best course of action.

“Considering the widespread community transmission of COVID-19, we encourage families to implement extra holiday precautions. Family gatherings should be limited, and when possible, travel should be avoided,” said Kim Musselman, Coconino County Health and Human Services Interim Director.

For more information on accessing county services and COVID-19 data, please visit www.coconino.az.gov.

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