

## NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Myra Stoney, Health Director, [director@swhealth.ne.gov](mailto:director@swhealth.ne.gov), 308-345-4223

### **Follow the Guidelines to Slow the Spread in Southwest Nebraska**

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) encourages all residents of southwest Nebraska to follow the recommended guidelines for reducing the spread of COVID-19 and to comply with isolation and quarantine instructions from the health department and medical providers, in order to protect the healthcare system from being overwhelmed and to keep the number of deaths from COVID-19 to as few as possible.

SWNPHD had 183 new cases of COVID-19 reported from October 20th to October 26th. A breakout by county includes: Chase – 25; Dundy – 7; Frontier – 13; Furnas – 12; Hayes – 7; Hitchcock – 11; Keith – 24; Perkins – 10; Red Willow – 74. This brings the totals for the health district to 755 cases with 488 cases recovered. One additional death due to COVID-19 was reported as well. Community spread of COVID-19 is occurring across all nine counties; currently Red Willow County is having the highest rate of community spread in the health district.

Any private business may put policies in place to prevent the spread of COVID in their workplace, including requiring employees and/or customers to wear a face covering or mask. State and local government agencies also have the ability to pass regulations for their jurisdiction to protect the safety and health of their residents. SWNPHD and other public health agencies provide information to leaders and the public about what has been shown to slow the spread of COVID-19 and why it is important; however, it is up to these leaders and each individual to put this information into practice.

Anyone who may possibly have COVID-19 is asked to stay home and not have contact with others in order to protect the health of the residents of southwest Nebraska. This includes people who are being tested to find out if they are positive or not, people who do not wish to be tested but believe they may have COVID-19, and people who have had a direct contact with someone who has tested positive. For direct contacts, quarantine begins after the date of the last contact and lasts for 14 days, which is how long it can take to develop an active COVID-19 infection.

Separating those who may have the virus from those who do not is essential to protecting vulnerable populations and the public in general. “We understand the difficulties that come with quarantine and want to thank everyone who completes a quarantine for their outstanding efforts to protect those around them,” stated Myra Stoney, Health Director at SWNPHD. “The sacrifices

being made by them and so many other Nebraskans during the fight against this pandemic are evidence of the best in us as Nebraskans.”

The COVID-19 Community Risk Dial for the week of October 27th remains at orange, meaning residents of southwest Nebraska have a high risk of contracting COVID-19. Testing is available but may require travel. Healthcare systems in the health district and across the state are burdened by the number of people hospitalized for COVID-19, with some hospitals no longer accepting transfers of COVID-19 patients. Use of intensive care units is at an all-time high in the state. Orange level recommendations include wearing a mask in public, washing hands and surfaces often, limiting travel, and working from home when possible. High-risk and vulnerable individuals should avoid public places.

COVID-19 information is available at [dhhs.ne.gov](http://dhhs.ne.gov) and [swhealth.ne.gov](http://swhealth.ne.gov). You can also follow SWNPHD on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. SWNPHD serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. SWNPHD is located at 404 West 10th St (1 block north of Arby's) in McCook.

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