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Promoting an Optimal State of Wellness in Lake County

PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Shelter-in-Place Modified and Extended to 5/3, Lake County Schools to Deliver Distance-Based Instruction through End of School Year

Gary Pace MD, MPH

Lake County, CA (April 6, 2020) – Recent days have brought confirmation of Lake County’s first and now second confirmed COVID-19 case, and there are clear indications regional activity of the virus continues to escalate. As of this morning (April 6) at 6:30am, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) had confirmed 15,158 total positive cases in California, and 350 deaths. Effects in cities and rural areas, alike, around the country have been truly sobering, and it has never been more important that we remain vigilant to protect those close to us, and those most vulnerable in our communities.

At the recommendation of Governor Gavin Newsom and State Superintendent Tony Thurmond, Lake County Office of Education acted Friday, April 3, to extend their distance-based instruction, “through the end of the school year, unless the situation improves and warrants a safe return to the classroom.” I have been in regular contact with Superintendent Falkenberg and others, and strongly believe this move reflects the actual conditions brought by the COVID-19 epidemic. This change is reflected in a new Addendum to the School Operations Modification Order (Order of the Health Officer No. C20-1, A2).

In recognition of the growing threat we are facing, I am also extending the local Shelter-in-Place Order (Order of the Health Officer No. C20-3, inclusive of Addenda 1 and 2, last amended prior to this update March 23, 2020).

Through May 3, 2020, all individuals currently living within the County (including the incorporated Cities of Clearlake and Lakeport) are ordered to shelter at their place of residence, unless leaving for Essential Activities, Essential Government Functions, to work for Essential Businesses, or to perform Minimum Basic Operations for non-essential businesses. Each of these terms is defined as indicated in Addendum 3 (No. C20-3, A3).

Individuals experiencing homelessness remain exempt, but are strongly urged to find shelter, and I am grateful for the work of Pastor Shannon and the Warming Center to expand their services, and provide shelter for many at this critical time.

Precautions must be taken, perhaps especially by those leaving their residence to perform Essential Activities. Any individual leaving their place of residence, for any purpose allowed by the Order, must strictly comply with the Order’s Social Distancing and Hygiene Requirements. Essentially all public and private gatherings of any number of people occurring outside a household or living unit are prohibited.

Individuals working exclusively from home can continue work-related activities. However, all businesses with a facility in Lake County, except Essential Businesses, must suspend all activities at their facility, except Minimum Basic Operations. Essential Businesses must prepare, post, and implement Social Distancing Protocols and follow industry-specific guidance from CDPH, and businesses with Non-Essential components to their business operation must scale down operations to only Essential Business operations.

Some further clarifications of limited exceptions are additionally offered.

Real Estate, for example, has been deemed an “Essential Business,” per Governor Newsom’s supplemental guidance to Executive Order N-33-20, issued March 20. This Order Addendum requires that appointments and other residential viewings occur virtually, unless an exemption is specifically provided by the Health Department. To discourage travel, and to protect those sheltering in place, exemptions will only be considered for local residents, and only when the unit is unoccupied. Hand washing and disinfecting of surfaces are likewise required.

In the interest of limiting wildfire risk to Lake County, Essential Workers now explicitly include landscapers and tree trimmers that are working on wildfire abatement, to include Vegetation Services, Tree Maintenance, Landscapers, Gardeners and Property Managers.

Directives for hotels have likewise been clarified, noting Lake County residents with special medical or other needs for temporary residence outside of the home may be accommodated when specifically exempted by the Health Department.

Please know I am aware how disruptive these mandates are, and that many facets of basic family life and business activity have become more difficult, or been precluded, altogether. Fortunately, there are some positive signs that statewide Shelter-in-Place (SIP) Orders are having a positive benefit, and slowing the spread of the virus. We were proactive, even anticipating the Governor’s mandate, in the interest of giving our local healthcare system the best possible chance to keep Lake County’s cases at a manageable level. Thanks to the cooperation of so many residents, we were able to buy valuable time, and there remains no evidence of community spread in Lake County, which is a great positive.

With the virus now confirmed in our County, everyone must commit to these primary strategies to limit entry and spread of the virus:

- Stay at home (and in contact with those in your immediate household, only) except for essential business;
- Isolate, even from family, if you develop symptoms;
- Wash your hands frequently; and
- Use cloth masks (not N95 or surgical masks) when out of the house.

Guidance and options for making your own cloth masks are provided here:

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Face-Coverings-Guidance.aspx>

For Lake County-specific Coronavirus information, please continue to visit the Lake County Health Services Department’s website: <http://health.co.lake.ca.us>

If you still have questions, send an email request: MHOAC@lakecountyca.gov.

You can also call during business hours: 707-263-8174

Please continue to Stay Informed, Stay Strong, and **Stay Home**.

Anyone ignoring the Shelter-in-Place order is breaking the law, and running the risk of jeopardizing your family and friends’ health, and also the health of the vulnerable people in your area.

Thank you,
Gary Pace MD, MPH