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Promoting an Optimal State of Wellness in Lake County

PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New Orders Signal Reopening, Require Continued Caution

Gary Pace MD, MPH

Lake County, CA (May 8, 2020) – Yesterday, the Governor issued new orders that signal a move to Stage 2 in the response to the COVID outbreak, and Lake County has followed suit. Under the new State orders, some retail businesses that are considered “low-risk” can now do phone and online sales with curbside pickup.

While this may seem like a small change, the fact we have moved into Stage 2 means we can prepare to move forward with further openings at a quicker speed than the larger urban areas.

Today, I am issuing orders that replace the previous local orders, by essentially aligning with the Governor’s orders. Previous discrepancies between the State and local orders will be removed. We will have a few clarifications specific to our county, mainly a continued need to get exemptions for people staying in hotels. This is in alignment with the governor’s continued Stay-at-Home (Shelter-in-Place) rules, but does afford a bit more accountability.

We have seen no rise in COVID cases in the two weeks since the last modifications, so we will open the lake and other local waterways this weekend to local residents, in consistency with State Orders. Boat ramps will be open, and Quagga Mussel program monitors will be in place.

We urge everyone to follow State and local directives to avoid non-essential and out-of-area travel. Many adjacent services out-of-area fisherman, for example, depend on when visiting remain closed. Local restaurants also remain closed, for the time being, except for take-out. Now is not the time for people from outside the area to visit Lake County.

Significant movement from outside of the area, particularly from regions with greater COVID-19 activity, continues to be one of the most significant threats we face. To date, all confirmed infections in both Lake and Mendocino Counties have originated from out-of-county contact with known positive cases. This strong evidence compels us to remain vigilant in keeping local hotels and vacation rentals closed for non-essential stays.

People over the age of 65, or otherwise vulnerable to severe complications of COVID-19 infection, need to stay safe this weekend, as there is likely to be more movement in Lake County communities.

There is an opportunity to open local businesses more quickly than the governor's orders, and plans are being developed to facilitate that. These proposals will be discussed at the BOS meeting on Tuesday. More information on the process surrounding accelerated reopening can be found here: <https://covid19.ca.gov/roadmap-counties/>

Meeting the health benchmarks, working with the State agencies, and effectively coordinating planning with local businesses will take a few weeks. Also in 2-3 weeks, we will be able to ensure our community is not suffering from an increase in cases due the increased activity we will likely see this weekend.

However, with movement toward reopening now happening more rapidly, businesses should not wait to undertake planning efforts. Resources for business owners, including a Reopening Plan template, Social Distancing protocols and Business Certification forms are available, at: <http://health.co.lake.ca.us/Coronavirus/Businesses.htm>

As sectors are authorized to resume business activities, all reopening businesses must post the Social Distancing Protocol Checklist and Business Certification document in a visible location near the entrance to all facilities. If you have any questions, or wish to have your reopening plan reviewed, please write to MHOAC@lakecountyca.gov.

Sector-specific guidance for businesses from the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the Department of Industrial Relations' Cal/OSHA Division is available here: <https://covid19.ca.gov/roadmap/>

A few counties in California recently opened up in defiance of the Governor's orders. These jurisdictions are now concerned, because people stopped following social distancing rules and seemed to discard the precautions that are needed, now more than ever. Businesses that opened despite State directives were visited by state licensing enforcement teams, and counties were informed they may lose some state funding.

The Shelter-in-Place Orders remain in effect. Do the right thing this weekend—follow the rules, keep social distancing, use masks. If someone in your family is vulnerable to severe COVID-19 complications, keep them home and safe.

We understand the importance of allowing more movement in the community, but we don't want to sacrifice the health of our elders and more fragile residents. Disobeying the safety precautions will almost certainly lead to a slower transition to opening the other businesses in Stage 2, and potentially to closing things back down after a short time.

We have done really well with Shelter in Place over the last two months. As we try to move out of this phase in a thoughtful and careful manner, we encourage continued patience and care for your neighbors. Lives may depend on it, and the ability to open more quickly can be slowed down with ignoring the rules.

With Mother's Day on Sunday, maintaining physical separation may be particularly difficult. While I certainly hope everyone will reach out to the mothers and mother figures in their lives, we can mirror the same care and concern they have always shown us by doing so in a safe and physically distanced manner.

For Lake County-specific Coronavirus information, or to pre-register for Drive-Thru testing, please visit the Lake County Health Services Department's website, <http://health.co.lake.ca.us/Coronavirus>.

The Lake County Coronavirus Response Hub has additional valuable resources: <https://lake-co-ca-coronavirus-response-lakecoca.hub.arcgis.com/>

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

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

Thank you for continuing to take recommended precautions, it truly will give us the best opportunity to take further steps to enable business and social activities to resume.

Gary Pace MD, MPH