

# Oregon officials announce new COVID-19 restrictions

By Sara Cline  
Associated Press/Report for America

**SALEM (AP)** — Following a record-breaking day of COVID-19 cases in Oregon, officials on Friday announced new restrictions that will be implemented in at least five of the state's counties as part of a two-week pause on social activities.

The updated safety measures, which begin November 11, include halting visitations to long-term care facilities, reducing the capacity of indoor dining at restaurants to 50 people, encouraging all businesses to mandate work from home, and urging Oregonians not to gather with people who do not live in their household, but if they do to limit it to just six people.

"Let me be clear, we cannot allow this disease to continue to spread so rapidly in our communities. Lives are at stake," Gov. Kate Brown said.

Currently, statewide safety measures in Oregon include banning indoor get-togethers of more than 10 people, the closure of restaurants and bars by 10 p.m., a capacity limit for restaurants and gyms set at 100 people inside and mask requirements for people five years or older in indoor public spaces, universities, office spaces and outdoor areas where physical distancing can not be maintained.

Under the updated measures, indoor dining at restaurants along with other indoor activity facilities such as gyms, fitness organizations, bowling alleys, ice rinks, indoor sports, pools and museums will all be reduced to a 50 person capacity.

Get-togethers with people should also be limited to six people, the health authority said. If people have multiple get-togethers, which is discouraged, it should be the same social circle of six people.

These pause measures will be in effect through November 25 for Malheur, Marion, Multnomah, Jackson and Umatilla counties.

The mayor of Portland, which is located in Multnomah County, applauded the governor for implementing the two-week restrictions.

"The best defense we have is prevention. We must all do our part to stop the spread of the virus from person to person. We all want to spend more time with friends and family, especially as the holiday season approaches," said Ted Wheeler. "To ensure we're able to gather with friends sooner rather than later, we all need to heed the Governor's direction to minimize our indoor gatherings and limit our social interactions over the next few weeks. This is the right step.

Five additional counties

— Washington, Baker, Union, Clackamas and Linn — are close to the COVID-19 thresholds that would necessitate adding them to the two-week pause. The Oregon Health Authority will determine Monday if any of these counties will be added.

The threshold for counties being added to the two-week pause is counties with a case rate above 200 cases per 100,000 people over a two-week period, or more than 60 cases over a two-week period for counties with less than 30,000 people.

"This two week pause is really a wakeup call for everyone I think, to show them just how serious the situation is right now," Charles Boyle, a spokesperson for the

governor's office, said. "This is the step before we need to consider additional closures."

Brown said if the COVID-19 situation does not improve in Oregon then "additional closures may be imminent" in two weeks.

The Oregon Health Authority reported 805 new confirmed COVID-19 cases Thursday, breaking the state's previous daily record of 600. In addition, the most recent percentage of positive COVID-19 tests in the state was 8.4 percent.

"It is alarming that recent high case rates are not linked to any specific outbreaks, but rather reflective of sporadic community spread," Brown said. "We are seeing in real time how this virus

can quickly snowball out of control.

On Friday, the health authority reported 769 new cases, increasing the number of cases in the state since the start of the pandemic to 48,608. The death toll is 716.

Officials say that the "unprecedented" numbers suggest that Oregonians are circulating more in their communities, letting their guard down and attending more indoor social gatherings.

Rachel Banks, the health authority's new public health director, cited recent incidents of transmission. A Halloween party that led to 14 infections and then a workplace outbreak. A family gathering where nine people became infected and then the disease

spread into two long-term care facilities, impacting 24 people and killing one.

In addition health experts have expressed concerns about hospitals nearing capacity.

Currently, there are 217 COVID-19 patients hospitalized in Oregon, a record number according to the Oregon Health Authority's dashboard. The previous record, outside the month of November, was 168 patients in July.

"I do not want to take further actions to stop the spread of COVID-19 because I know it will have a devastating impact on our businesses," Brown said. "But, I absolutely will, if necessary, to protect the health and safety of Oregonians."

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