

Brown orders smaller crowds, earlier bar closures in bid to stifle COVID-19

Outdoor gatherings still limited to 250

By Gary A. Warner
For the Oregon Capital Bureau

Gov. Kate Brown on July 22 ordered bars to close earlier, lowered the age for mask requirements, further limited crowd sizes and said she may impose travel restrictions.

Brown spoke at a morning teleconference to lay out new rules she said are required because the spread of COVID-19 in the state remains too rapid to contain. State officials said the number of cases of new infections was up 26% from the week before.

“Oregon, we ventured out onto the ice together, and that ice has begun to crack. Before we fall through the ice, we need to take steps to protect ourselves and our community,” Brown said.

Effective Friday, July 24:
• Anyone 5 and older must wear a mask in public indoor spaces and outdoors where



Pamplin Media Group photo
Gov. Kate Brown increased regulations after a spike in COVID-19 cases.

social distancing is not possible. Masks are recommended but not required for those between 2 and 5.

• The maximum number of people allowed inside indoor restaurants, bars, churches, theaters and other venues is reduced from 250 to 100.

• Restaurants and bars in Phase 2 counties — which includes most of the state — must close at 10 p.m., two

hours earlier than the current regulations.

• Gyms must require face masks even while customers exercise.

In one loosening of restrictions, Brown announced that outdoor visits to people in long-term care facilities will be allowed as long as there are no virus cases at the facility.

Brown said the limit of 250 people at outdoor gatherings

would not be changed at this time. The limit on 10 people at indoor private events would also stay the same.

Oregon officials are in discussions with neighboring states on how to implement possible restrictions targeting leisure travel from states and other places that are “hot spots.” Brown said any restrictions would not limit commerce or travel for business.

Brown said the state’s watchlist of counties with the most acute situations of COVID-19 will be revised within the next few days. Some counties may go off the list while others will be added.

More guidance for schools on reopening was also issued last week. Brown reiterated that “many if not most” schools will likely be teaching via distance learning or a hybrid of distance learning and in-class instruction.

“This is not an on or off switch,” Brown said. “This disease is something that, for the time being, we must learn to live with.”

Oregon has ‘glimmer of hope’ on COVID-19 trends

Sidelinger: ‘We can start to see infections drop again if we reduce transmission’

By Gary A. Warner
For the Oregon Capital Bureau

On a day when the one-day death toll from COVID-19 set a new record, Oregon health officials said some long-range forecasting offers a “glimmer of hope” that the rise in infections could be ebbing.

“These projections show that we’re at a real turning point,” said Dr. Dean Sidelinger, the state’s top infectious disease expert. “We can start to see infections drop again if we reduce transmission.”

The “cautious optimism” came on a day that the Oregon Health Authority also issued some stark new figures.

Oregon reported nine deaths Friday — a new one-day record. Deschutes County and Umatilla County each had two deaths. The state’s death toll is 282. The 28 deaths in the past week account for just under 10% of the total since the first death, later identified as Portland dancer Lynn Bryan, 70, who died on March 14.

Sidelinger said deaths lag behind reports of infections and hospitalizations, and the spike in cases on and immediately after the July 4 holiday means the daily death toll is likely to climb higher.

OHA also reported 396 new cases of COVID-19 Friday, bringing the total since the first case appeared Feb. 28 to more than 16,000.

The percentage of tests that are positive climbed over the past week to 6.6%, up from 6.2% the week before. Health officials have said they need the rate to be 5% or lower to keep the pandemic under control in Oregon.

The hopeful signs are a slowing in the rise of cases. A key measurement is the “r factor” — the number for how many people each infected person passes the virus on to. Today, the r factor in Oregon is 1.15.

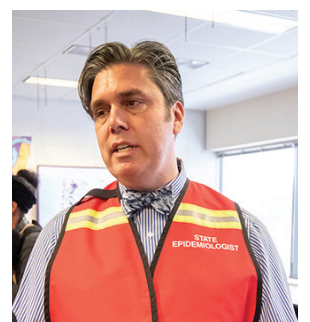
Oregon Health Authority Director Pat Allen noted a New York Times survey that showed more than 70% of Oregon residents are complying with orders to wear masks in public spaces indoors and when unable to maintain 6 feet of social distance outdoors.

Allen said the state would continue to hammer the “3 Ws”: wash, wear a mask and watch your distance from others.

“It’s kind of a boring theme, but by dint of repetition, it is getting through,” Allen said. “We are seeing signs in the data that people are paying attention.”

Allen reiterated that any gatherings have a lower chance of spreading the virus if held outdoors instead of indoors. It’s a message Allen said will be repeated and repeated.

Oregon currently has enough hospital beds, intensive care unit beds and ventilators to handle the projected load of cases. While infections are on the rise, the largest group accounting for new



Pamplin Media Group photo
State Epidemiologist Dean Sidelinger addresses the media during a tour of the Oregon Health Authority’s Area Operations Center for the Coronavirus.

cases are age 20-29, making up 22% of the total. They are less likely to suffer acute symptoms, need hospitalization or die.

Sidelinger said an additional 10% drop in the infection rate would push the push the r factor under 1.0, which would mean a decline in new daily cases.

But any let-up in following the rules could lead to a 10% increase in infections that would show up in more hospitalizations and deaths.

“Cases would keep surging and we would rapidly run out of capacity to treat people who become seriously ill,” he said.

Gov. Kate Brown’s current COVID-19 state of emergency order runs through Sept. 4, the Friday before the start of the three-day Labor Day weekend. The Memorial Day and July 4 holidays showed spikes in cases immediately afterwards.

Sidelinger said the timing of any announcement is up to Brown, but that the current numbers pointed to an additional extension of the state of emergency.

Allen said the state expected to send out guidelines about possible K-12 school reopening procedures sometime next week.

As of Friday, there have been 4.09 million COVID-19 cases in the United States, with 145,060 deaths, according to the Johns Hopkins University Coronavirus Resource Center. Worldwide, there have been over 15.6 million cases and 636,404 deaths, the center says.

The pandemic continues to set record numbers nationwide. California, Texas and Florida alone accounted for more than 500 deaths on Thursday.

Dr. Deborah Birx, the White House Coronavirus Task Force coordinator, said the three states were having a spike in cases unlike anything since the infection swept through New York this spring.

“What we have right now are essentially three New Yorks,” Birx said in an interview with NBC.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the top U.S. government expert on infectious diseases, told the Washington Post that states where the virus is rapidly rising should reverse their re-openings until they can get the case loads under control.



Eagle file photo

Gov. Kate Brown announced that all Oregon residents are required to wear masks or face coverings in indoor public spaces.

State will require all K-12 students to wear face coverings in schools

State will release another update to fall school plan Aug. 11

By Jackson Hogan
EO Media Group

All K-12 students in Oregon will be required to wear face coverings if they return to classrooms this fall, according to a new state mandate. All school staff in K-12 schools will also be required to wear face coverings such as masks or shields.

This decision, announced Wednesday by the Oregon Department of Educa-

tion, reverses the state’s previous guidelines from June, which only recommended that older students wear face coverings.

The state will distribute 5 million face coverings — donated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency — to school districts throughout Oregon to help schools meet this new requirement, according to a state press release.

Charan Cline, superintendent of Redmond School District, said he believes the face covering mandate is the right call based on current medical evidence. He also said there will be alternate options for families who don’t wish to

have their children wear face masks.

“I think it’s very doable,” Cline said of the mandate. “Not every family will agree with this, and I think if families don’t agree, we’re creating a very good K-12 distance learning model.”

Gov. Kate Brown, in a press conference Wednesday morning, said that face coverings will be required for all Oregon children ages 5 and older in public. She thanked parents, guardians and child care providers in advance for helping children understand the importance of wearing a mask.

“Obviously, I cannot be everywhere all at once,”

Brown said at the press conference. “I am incredibly grateful that parents are willing to step up and help us with this really important task.”

Dean Sidelinger, the state’s chief health officer, added that although getting students back into classrooms this fall is a priority, it is key to do so with precautions.

“We know that getting kids in front of a trained teacher to receive quality education can really make an impact on those children,” he said at the press conference. “But we need to do it safely.”

The state will release another update to its fall school plan on Aug. 11, the release stated.

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