

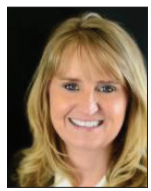
Morrow County moved to lower risk category

The shift allows some businesses to open at greater capacity

By **BRYCE DOLE**
STAFF WRITER

Morrow County started operating under “low risk” rules for COVID-19 on Friday, March 12, allowing restaurants, fitness and entertainment facilities to open at greater capacities.

The move comes as the county continues to see relatively low case counts, with 33 confirmed and presumptive cases reported between Feb. 14 and 27, according to data from the Oregon Health Authority.



The state looks at a county’s case count or testing positivity rate over a recent two-week period to determine what its risk level should be.

“We’re just really excited to see our numbers get down to the point where we can celebrate the hard work that all the citizens have done,” Morrow County Commissioner Melissa Lindsay said.

The new levels went into effect on Friday, March 12.

Morrow County was one of 13 counties lowered in the state’s latest assessment of COVID-19 risks on March 9, showing positive signs that the state is making strides toward overcoming the pandemic.

“We are largely seeing case rates decline across the state, with the most counties in the Lower Risk level since the framework was introduced in November,” Gov. Kate Brown said in a press release. “I encourage all Oregonians to keep it up and to get your vaccine when it’s available to you.”



Irelynn Kollman serves cookies to go at Breaking Grounds Coffee in Heppner on Feb. 19, 2021. Morrow County has been lowered from moderate coronavirus risk category to lower risk, allowing a variety of businesses to open at greater capacities.

COUNTY RISK CATEGORIES		
Effective Friday, March 12	High)	Extreme)
Lower Risk (13)	Klamath (Moved from High)	Marion
Clatsop	Lane (Moved from High)	Polk
Crook (Moved from High)	Linn	Umatilla
Gilliam	Malheur*	Extreme Risk (2)
Grant	Multnomah (Moved from High)	Coos
Harney (Moved from Moderate)	Tillamook (Moved from Lower)	Douglas
Hood River (Moved from Moderate)	Union	*Malheur County qualifies for High Risk but is given a two-week caution period at Moderate Risk because it moved down from Extreme Risk in the last movement period.
Lake (Moved from Moderate)	Washington	**Jackson County qualifies for Extreme Risk but is given a two-week caution period at High Risk because it moved down from Extreme Risk in the last movement period.
Lincoln	Yamhill (Moved from High)	
Morrow (Moved from Moderate)	High Risk (9)	
Sherman	Benton (Moved from Extreme)	
Wallowa	Columbia	
Wasco	Curry (Moved from Moderate)	
Wheeler	Jackson**	
Moderate Risk (12)	Jefferson (Moved from Extreme)	
Baker (Moved from Lower)	Josephine (Moved from	
Clackamas		
Deschutes (Moved from		

ians to keep it up and to get your vaccine when it’s available to you.”

Almost all the counties that were lowered in the state’s risk category are located east of the Cascades. Umatilla County, however, did not see its

status change, though cases have continued to decline on average. The county will remain at high risk until the metrics are reassessed after another two weeks.

The change for Morrow allows indoor social gatherings at a maximum of 10 people from as many as four separate households. As many as 12 people can also gather outdoors, with no mentioned cap on households, according to state guidelines.

The change expands



“I THINK IT’S A PRODUCT OF A LOT OF FOLKS WHO HAVE GIVEN UP AN AWFUL LOT.”

Jim Doherty, Morrow County Commissioner.

indoor and outdoor capacity for restaurants and extends closing hours to midnight. Indoor and outdoor recreation and facilities, entertainment establishments and religious gatherings can all expand capacity.

“My biggest hope is that it gives people hope,” Lindsay said, “and that they’ve seen some of the good actions they’ve taken working and that it will drive us into the last stage, which is the vaccination, and that they’ll get the vaccination and that we’ll get back to our lives.”

Lindsay added that, in light of the change, she remains concerned that the shift in risk category will cause the county to “let our guard down and start having larger gatherings and it will spread again and we’ll have the numbers increase and go backwards.”

Since the pandemic began last year, the county has reported 1,052 positive cases and a testing positivity rate of 14.4% — the highest in the state, according to an *Oregonian*/Oregonlive database.

“We certainly don’t want to celebrate the numbers where they’re at with a big old festival where we all get together maskless, right?” Morrow County Commissioner Jim Doherty said. “Take it to heart, start breathing, and start looking around

and understand that, look, the needle is moving and we’re moving the needle and there is a tomorrow.”

Doherty said he is especially hopeful that the change will help the county’s Hispanic community, who have disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, at one point accounting for nearly 60% of the county’s reported cases despite making up approximately 38% of its population.

“They’re the backbone of Morrow County,” Doherty said, adding that Hispanic residents make up a large portion of the county’s agricultural workforce, which drives the county’s economy but has oftentimes placed workers at a greater risk of contracting the virus.

“In that family, they’ve got to be really feeling a weight coming off their shoulders,” Doherty said.

Doherty said county businesses will be among those that benefit most from the change. He added that with recent developments from the CDC, saying that vaccinated people can begin gathering indoors without social distancing and mask wearing, all signs are showing in a positive direction.

“I think it’s a product of a lot of folks who have given up an awful lot,” Doherty said.

Switch & Get

Samsung Galaxy S21 5G

FREE

No Hidden Requirements

SAMSUNG Galaxy S21 5G

Navigate Wireless
1565 N. 1st St., Hermiston, 541-289-8722

Requires a new line, postpaid Smartphone service plan, port-in, credit approval, qualified Smartphone purchase and comes via monthly bill credit on a 30-mo. RIC. 5G capable device required to experience 5G. 5G coverage not available in all areas. See uscellular.com/coverage-map for details. Taxes, fees, and additional restrictions apply.

Things we want you to know: New consumer or small business (25 lines or less) postpaid Smartphone service plan, new line and port-in required. Tax due at sale. A Regulatory Cost Recovery Fee applies; this is not a tax or gov't-required charge. Additional fees, taxes, terms, conditions and coverage areas may apply and vary by plan, service and phone. Credit approval required. Offers valid at participating locations only and cannot be combined. See store or uscellular.com for details. OFFER DETAILS: Purchase a Samsung GS21, GS21 Plus or GS21 Ultra via 0% APR, \$0 down, 30-mo. Retail Installment Contract (RIC) and receive an \$800 bill credit divided into 30 monthly credits. Bill credit applied within 3 bill cycles and ends when balance is paid. Line must remain in good standing with required price plan for entire 30-mo. RIC. In the event of cancellation of service, customer will be responsible for the entire RIC balance. Free offer applies to base model and memory. 5G capable device required to experience 5G. 5G coverage not available in all areas. See uscellular.com/coverage-map for details. Kansas Customers: In areas in which UScellular receives support from the Federal Universal Service Fund, all reasonable requests for service must be met. Unresolved questions concerning service availability can be directed to the Kansas Corporation Commission Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Protection at 1-800-662-0027. Limited-time offer. While supplies last. Trademarks and trade names are the property of their respective owners. Offers valid at participating locations only and cannot be combined. See store or uscellular.com for details. ©2021 UScellular

READY SET GO!

We'll make your first month's lease payment on a Highlander.

NEW 2021 HIGHLANDER XLE

\$0

FIRST MONTH PAYMENT

\$359

PER MONTH THEREAFTER

35

MONTHS

+2,999 DUE AT SIGNING, PLUS TAXES AND FEES

AFTER \$500 BONUS CASH

Lease a Camry AWD and the first month's payment is on us.

NEW 2021 CAMRY LE AWD

\$0

FIRST MONTH PAYMENT

\$308

PER MONTH THEREAFTER

35

MONTHS

+2,958 DUE AT SIGNING, PLUS TAXES AND FEES

TOYOTA.COM

See Your Local Toyota Dealer

ToyotaCare⁺

Prototypes shown with options. Extra-cost color shown. Excludes TRD Pro models. Lease a new 2021 Highlander XLE for \$359 a month for 36 months with \$3,499 due at signing on approved credit through Toyota Financial Services. \$500 Subvention Cash applied to amount due at signing. TFS lease due at signing of \$3,499 includes \$2,490 Cap. Cost Reduction, \$650 acq. Fee which totals \$3,140 down, and 1st month's payment. Base MSRP excl. freight is \$41,410. Cap cost \$40,112. Lease-end purchase option \$28,316. Total lease cost is \$16,064. Security deposit waived. \$350 disposition fee due at lease end. On approved credit from Toyota Financial Services for Tier 1+ customers only. 1st month lease payment covered up to \$600 for new 2021 Highlander models. \$359 a month for 35 months due from month two to end of the lease. Lease a new 2021 Camry LE AWD for \$308 a month for 36 months with \$2,958 due at signing on approved credit through Toyota Financial Services. TFS lease due at signing of \$2,958 includes \$2,000 Cap. Cost Reduction, \$650 acq. fee which totals \$2,650 down, and 1st month's payment. Base MSRP excl. freight is \$30,420. Cap cost \$29,425. Lease-end purchase option \$17,421. Total lease cost is \$13,738. Security deposit waived. \$350 disposition fee due at lease end. On approved credit from Toyota Financial Services for Tier 1+ customers only. 1st month lease payment covered up to \$400 for new 2021 Camry models. \$359 a month for 35 months due from month two to end of the lease. Call 1-800-79-Toyota for details. Does not include taxes, license, title/registration fees, dealer fees and Oregon tax (.05%). Down payment may be required. Does not include College Grad or Military Rebate. Varies by region. See dealer for details. Customer responsible for maintenance, excess wear and tear and \$0.15 per mile over 12,000 miles per year. Lease does not include taxes, license, title fees, insurance, regionally required equipment and other dealers' charges are extra and not included in the amounts shown. Closed-end lease. Payment may vary depending upon final transaction price. Subject to availability. Offers may vary by region. See participating dealer for details. *ToyotaCare Covers normal factory scheduled service for 2 years or 25,000 miles, whichever comes first. See Toyota dealer for details and exclusions. Valid only in the continental U.S. and Alaska. Offers end 3/31/21.