



Chaffee County Public Health

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CDPHE Moves Chaffee County to Orange Level Due to Increased COVID-19 Incidence

Due to the continued rising incidence of COVID-19 cases in Chaffee County, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) is requiring that Chaffee County move into the “orange” level, the next restrictive level, at 5pm on Friday, December 4th. Over the past month, Chaffee County has been implementing a mitigation plan in hopes of decreasing the spread of the virus in our communities. This plan has included building greater capacity for testing, tracing, education, and outreach, while also recently implementing several new restrictions which include the following:

- Indoor places of worship are 25% capacity or 50 whichever is less, virtual strongly recommended.
- Only **necessary** events can take place until further notice following the 25% or 25 person cap using the distancing calculator if standing or 6ft distancing between parties if seated for indoors AND 25% or 50 person cap using the distancing calculator if standing or 6 ft distancing for seated for outdoors. In-person events are highly discouraged at this time.
- Non-school related group sports and activities are limited to virtual or outdoors in groups less than 10 with no close contact if there is not a specific sector guidance available. An exemption would be if a group already has a CCPH supported plan in place. At this time, there will be no additional plans accepted until our incidence rate can improve.
- Personal gathering size is limited to 10 with no more than 2 households indoors or outdoors.
- Group sizes seated together at restaurants or at start/finish areas for sporting events should exceed no more than 6.
- Encouraging remote work and staggered shifts for all business sectors to reduce number of people working together in-person.
- Except for critical business or critical operations of the county, voluntary 14 day self-quarantine is strongly recommended when **unnecessary** out of county travel or participation in a risky activity (lack of distancing and mask wearing) occurs- before and after.
- All residents who have engaged in activities that pose risk should seek out testing, especially if becoming symptomatic with **any** COVID-19 symptom.

Unfortunately, these strategies have not worked as we had hoped, and the stakes are now higher than they have been post-Stay at Home.

The major theme in moving from the yellow to orange level is that capacity for most sectors is reduced from 50% to 25%.

“We understand that for many in our business community, the reduction in capacity, especially due to the colder weather and limited options, is crippling. We have done everything possible to provide our county with the greatest amount of time and support to prepare for this chapter in the pandemic. I am proud that we have gotten this far, and it ultimately has come down to mainly innocent, but risky, behaviors that have moved us in this direction. I will reiterate that every positive case inches us toward a more restrictive environment where businesses and schools may have to scale back on how they operate and hopefully not fully closing. If ever there was a time to make the right decisions, even though they are challenging, it is now. The majority of our county has worked so hard to keep this from happening. Now is the time to protect us from sliding into the red level. It is going to take each and every one of us, and if anyone can do it, Chaffee County can,” Andrea Carlstrom, Chaffee County Public Health Director.

For more information on the statewide COVID-19 dashboard and dial, go to:

<https://covid19.colorado.gov/data/covid-19-dial/covid-19-dial-dashboard>. For the capacity restrictions associated with level and sector, go to: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1kGtoALK9qtU1fwQGUss2yYTWKtc3ocMX/view>. CCPH has been working closely with the Chaffee County Economic Development Corporation, the Chambers of Commerce, the Small Business Development Corporation, and the local business alliances and coalitions so that we get specific sector messaging out and questions can be answered as soon as possible. At this time, there is no restriction on short-term lodging, including hotels, motels, and rentals. In addition, Chaffee County is still open to tourism and visitors, as long as everyone is following the state and local public health orders. “We know this is frustrating for some who see visitors having fun while others are staying home. Let’s do what we can to safely support our local economy on this tightrope that we continue to walk.”

An amended local public health order will go into effect Friday evening to reflect the new orange level restrictions. In addition, the areas in the mitigation plan will be included.

CCPH has provided the county with weeks of warning that it is quite likely going to be moving into the orange level at some point soon if the case count cannot be controlled and to be prepared. At this point, the majority of spread is through social gatherings and travel outside of the county. CCPH’s plea is to limit social interactions to no more than 10 people from 2 households (if you have to), wear a mask and space yourself when interacting with others, especially indoors, do not leave the house if you are symptomatic, and follow current isolation and quarantine orders. Creative curbside, delivery, appointment, and online options are encouraged, especially for our highest risk populations.

Meanwhile, Chaffee’s Got H.E.A.R.T. has launched to unite us in our greatest time of need. Chaffee County residents and friends can take the pledge to follow the 5 commitments to containment at www.chaffeegotheart.com.

“Even though a vaccine is on the horizon, and the holidays are amidst us, we must be diligent to keep our beloved county safe.”