

PRESS RELEASE

Date: May 13, 2020

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Kittitas County - we know you want Answers to the Variance Question

Kittitas County submitted an application for variance, which would allow us to move into Phase 2 of Washington's Phased Approach to Reopening, on May 4th. On May 7th, the Kittitas County Incident Management Team (IMT) was alerted to a potential outbreak in our county. Since then, our application for variance has been "on pause." In that time, we've heard from our community and, often, those responses are anxious. People are anxious to open, people are anxious about getting sick, and people want answers. Your IMT is listening and sees community members escalating, losing hope, and becoming angrier in response to an illness we can't see.

To move forward with the variance, our IMT must suppress the current outbreak, which requires broad community effort. As of today (Wednesday), all close contacts from the COVID positive patients tested on Friday have been contacted, quarantined or isolated. If you know any one impacted, you're welcome to provide assistance with grocery delivery or medications so that COVID patients and those exposed can stay home.

Though our application is "on pause," we continue working through the response plan submitted to show that IMT's capabilities are not exceeded and we can keep the outbreak from threatening our entire community. The other two options are either a *yes* or a *no* from the state; however, the *yes* is not going to happen at this time. The state, without additional evidence to show that this outbreak is not a threat to our entire community, cannot grant the variance. The "no" from the state would mean we are denied and we have to redraft and complete the application again, which would require another 21 days with no COVID-positive cases in our county.

IMT believes we can prove that our community is protected, an outbreak can be contained, and we are ready for Phase 2. To demonstrate that readiness, our Assessment Coordinator is working with IMT personnel in providing a detailed report that shows how we will keep this outbreak from being a community threat. The information will include the amount of testing completed within mere hours, the number of people contacted, the amount of people in isolation or quarantine, and our plan moving forward, which may include additional testing to show the amount of disease present in our community from this outbreak.

"Our Incident Management Team can no longer wait, because our community can no longer wait," states Health Officer Dr. Mark Larson. "Our application was a quick turnaround and impressed the state. We intend to have this report out to the state by Friday." We will continue to model kindness and compassion in this community. Please continue to help us ensure that we move forward, safely, against COVID-19 in our county.

To Protect and Promote the Health and the Environment of the People of Kittitas County

If you have questions about your health, please contact your healthcare provider or you can call the Temporary COVID Clinic at KVH at 509-933-8850. If you are having a medical emergency, call 911 or go to the Emergency Department at KVH. If you have general questions about COVID-19, please call the EOC at 509-933-8315 or 509-933-8305.

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