



Chelan-Douglas Health District

200 Valley Mall Parkway, East Wenatchee, WA 98802

COVID-19 Messages for March 12, 2020 From Chelan-Douglas Health District

At least 12 of Washington State's 39 counties are now reporting COVID-19 cases and our Health District shares a border with four of them, including the two most affected counties in the nation. There are almost certainly cases already in our communities, though they may be mild or non-symptomatic cases which are invisible yet still able to infect others. We do not yet have lab-confirmed cases.

Almost all of us will get through this just fine, but there will be a significant number of deaths among the elderly and other high-risk groups. The time to get serious about every available preventive measure is right now, today. Failure to do so will result in more deaths among neighbors and relatives, even though most of us will come through OK. To save as many precious lives as we can, WE NEED EACH OTHER.

Your public health department issues the following urgent recommendations today:

- People over age 60, those with major chronic diseases like diabetes, heart disease or respiratory problems, and pregnant women are urged to stay home as much as possible in the coming weeks to minimize exposure to the virus.
- Your local health department firmly urges the cancellation of in-person group events of any size, and especially the larger ones with over 20 participants, for the foreseeable future.
- If you absolutely must hold a group event of any size, contrary to the advice of public health experts everywhere, do all you can to minimize participation by high risk people and minimize contact among participants by maintaining a separation of at least 6 feet among them so far as possible. People with fever of 100.4 degrees or higher and with a cough should be asked to stay home.
- Anyone staying home from work, cancelling events or modifying business operations to minimize this epidemic is **doing their civic duty** and should be sustained as well as possible by the rest of us. Employers should consider continued compensation when possible, along with all other measures to sustain those temporarily laid off. We urge all community groups – including social service organizations, faith-based organizations, schools and PTOs, and others – to take the initiative right now to organize efforts to sustain high risk and laid-off people with whom you are associated, with food and household supplies. Financial institutions should implement all possible policies easing debt, mortgage deadlines, and related obligations for the duration of this pandemic.

This is becoming a community crisis and we are all in it together. Please do your part, because it will make a difference in the number of cases and deaths we ultimately have in our area. Anything we can do to delay cases will also help our health care providers care for us by making it more feasible to manage the severe demands they will face.

Finally, there is a lot of speculation about school closures. Experts at our state Department of Health are working with local and national experts along with CDC to use the best available models to predict the many effects and problems from school closures. One thing that is clear is that closures are less effective when taken too early in an outbreak, and when delayed until it peaks. That is why school closures have not been widely ordered by public officials so far. We may get there, but we are not there yet. Any school officials who make the decision to close in the meantime, after considering the unique circumstances of each school district, should be supported for doing everything possible to help protect our community.

COVID-19 Resources:

[Chelan-Douglas Health District](#)
[Washington State Department of Health](#)
[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

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