**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Routt County Board of Health Issues Revised Public Health Orders**

**to Address High Case Counts**

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS, February 1, 2021 – The Routt County Board of Health amended the existing Public Health Order to implement restrictions in order to decrease case counts in the community. The new Public Health Order focuses on a few areas including: limiting personal gatherings to one household; requiring restaurants to keep contact tracing logs, seating only one household at a time and other prevention measures but staying at 25% occupancy; and requiring office-based businesses to reduce to 10% occupancy. This revised Public Health Order is in effect starting February 1st until March 1st. Commissioners discussed in depth the trends in the state where ski resort communities have higher case counts than the rest of the state. The Commissioners also discussed the need to explore policies to address the high incidence that is impacting all ski resort communities

Chair of the Routt County Commissioners, Tim Corrigan said, “We know we are in unique situation compared to the rest of the state. We can see the highest rates of incidences are in our ski area communities…The best thing we can do is to get this under control so we can work towards getting our kids back in school and our economy moving. We know it’s hard, but we need to bite the bullet now. My hope is that in a couple of weeks we will see a change.”

Commissioner Tim Redmond commented on the revised Order, “Well, we are damned if we do and damned if we don’t. We need to protect our population. We are in a difficult situation, we are asking employers to conduct health screenings of their employees, yet we are not asking the health status of any tourists. That is difficult to swallow. It’s my duty to do something to get the numbers down. If the current restrictions don’t work, I would ask Public Health to look in their toolbox and consider whether we should be asking for negative tests before people arrive in our community.”

“I believe this new Public Health Order takes the measures we need to have a significant impact of disease prevalence while minimizing economic hardship,” said Commissioner Beth Melton, “I am cautiously optimistic. If our case numbers and incidence rates go down, I look forward to going back to Level Orange. I also agree that if more measures are needed, our next step will be to look at ways to increase safety measures with tourists.”

The revised Public Health Order requires the following:

* **Restaurants** shall operate at the same Dial level to which the County is subject. At the present Level Orange, restaurants can operate at 25% occupancy. Additionally, the following requirements must be followed:
* Customers of separate residences must be seated at different tables and at least six feet apart from one another.
* Face coverings must be worn at all times except by customers while actively consuming food or beverages.
* Restaurants shall keep records of all customers including name and telephone contact until this Order is rescinded.
* Update mitigation protocol to include measures that attempt to limit the amount of time patrons spend in a restaurant to only the time they spend eating.
* **Non-Critical Office Based Businesses**. These businesses are limited as set forth in the COVID-19 Dial except that in-person work shall not exceed 10% of posted occupancy limits while Routt County is designated as Level Orange.
* **Limitations on Gatherings**. Public and private gatherings are limited to one household. This includes limits on lodging to one household.

In addition, those who are holding events are reminded that both indoor and outdoor events are required to submit an event mitigation plan in compliance with [indoor](https://covid19.colorado.gov/indoor-events) or [outdoor](https://covid19.colorado.gov/outdoor-events) event guidance 14 days in advance of the event. Events which do not submit such a plan are in violation of the local public health order. The board also discussed high school sports, which are governed by CHSAA through a state variance and are not impacted by the changes to the local public health order.

The Board of Health also discussed that the State of Colorado is changing some of the metrics of the COVID-19 Dial including letting counties move between levels based on 7- day reporting, instead of 14-day reporting. The state is taking public comment on these changes until 5:00pm today and it is expected that a revised dial framework will be announced later this week. The Routt County Public Health Order will be in effect until March 1st, regardless of the state changes to the dial.

Roberta Smith, Public Health Director shared her concerns, “We are starting to decline, but we only have a couple days of data. We were provided cell phone mobility data from CDPHE.. It is interesting and telling, that we are seeing tourists lingering in restaurants. That’s why we are recommending that when people are at a table and they are not eating or drinking, they should put their masks on. This prevention measure will help with disease spread.”

County Medical Officer, Dr. Brian Harrington added, “There is a functional aspect to this community spread. We have had to quarantine classrooms; employers have had challenges. Until we get the disease prevalence under control, our school and our businesses will continue to struggle.”

Ms. Smith added, “We are still in a pandemic and people are coming here from a pandemic. People need to realize that when they come here it’s not vacation as usual. Tourists need to follow the same protocols as our residents to get the cases down. We all need to ask ourselves: how can I limit my impact? What behavior can I exhibit to keep this community safe?”

The Commissioners voted 3-0 and approved the revised Public Health Order. The new language will be available at [www.covid19routtcounty.com](http://www.covid19routtcounty.com). The Board of Health will meet again on Wednesday, February 3rd at 10:30 am.

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