

NE Oregon Joint Information Center

Union and Wallowa Counties



Email: NEOregonJIC@gmail.com

For Immediate Release

Contact: NE Oregon JIC (541)963-1098

June 17, 2020 12:00

La Grande, Oregon – The Union County Incident Management Team (IMT) issued a recommendation to the Union County Board of Commissioners at a regularly scheduled meeting this morning requesting citizens voluntarily return to Phase 1 regulations. The Board approved the request as a recommendation to the community.

This is not a mandate, but a recommendation that the community implement mitigation measures consistent with Phase 1. The IMT and the Board of Commissioners believe these actions will be in the best interest of the community. Keeping the community safe and as healthy as possible in these challenging times is the priority. Board approval was unanimous.

Sheriff Boyd Rasmussen and La Grande Police Chief Gary Bell were at the meeting to discuss potential enforcement challenges that have been experienced throughout the state and nation. It was their guidance, the consensus of the IMT, and the Board of Commissioners that the recommendation be implemented voluntarily. The community is well aware of the prolific presence of the virus in the community and will act in accordance with guidance and best practices. Since the implementation will be voluntary, enforcement will be in the form of education for those having challenges with meeting Phase 1 level mitigations.

This decision was made due to the significant rise in confirmed COVID-19 case numbers, concerns for the protection of the community, and concerns for impacts to Grande Ronde Hospital. Voluntary adherence by citizens will apply to individuals, businesses and organizations, although many have already voluntarily returned to the Phase 1 guidance.

The Board of Commissioners also passed a recommendation to urge Union County citizens to adhere to Oregon Health Authority guidance related to wearing cloth face covering and masks. The guidance states that cloth face coverings or masks should be worn when physical distancing guidelines cannot be observed.

Additional testing is continuing throughout the county with testing clinics scheduled for tomorrow and Friday. As test results continue to be returned, this will reflect how far outside of the initial outbreak the coronavirus has spread. We are asking for the community's participation in a voluntary return to Phase 1.

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