



Governor Sisolak Announces COVID-19 Risk Mitigation Initiatives

LAS VEGAS, NV - March 17, 2020



**NEVADA
HEALTH
RESPONSE**

Today, Governor Steve Sisolak held a press conference updating Nevadans on actions and guidance issued by the State of Nevada to prepare for and mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in our State.

"I have spoken with Nevada's top medical experts to get their assessment of our current situation and most responsible next steps," Gov. Sisolak said. "They have advised that the most effective course of action is to direct all Nevadans to stay home and for all nonessential businesses to close to the public for 30 days.

The Governor's prepared remarks were as follows:

Good evening.

You are all aware of the gravity of the COVID-19 crisis, around the world and right here in Nevada. I have taken what I believe were the necessary steps to date to try to mitigate this pandemic and keep our community safe, including closing our K-12 schools and recommending that we all follow social distancing guidelines. Today, it is clear additional steps must be taken, immediately, in order to slow the spread of this deadly virus in our state.

We have all closely monitored the World Health Organization and CDC guidelines and research. The World Health Organization has stated that the number of secondary infections generated from one infected individual is between 2 and 2.5 for COVID-19. That's higher than the rate of reproduction for the flu. And according to experts at Imperial College in the United Kingdom, the doubling rate of this virus globally is roughly 4 to 5 days. That spread is alarming.

Our hospitals are prepared right now to help those most critically affected by this virus. And in fact, 80 percent of those who are infected have only mild or no symptoms. But in order for those who will need critical care to be able to receive it, the rest of us need to do our part to stay healthy and keep our facilities available for those patients. It is our responsibility, our duty to each other and to the most vulnerable Nevadans, to each take our role in stopping the spread seriously, and to Stay Home for Nevada.

Remember that these medical professionals - our doctors, nurses, emergency workers - these folks are putting their own lives at risk for all of us. They HAVE to go to work every day - that's their job, and they are committed to helping and treating us. You are being told NOT to go out. You owe it to them to listen to that directive.

I have spoken with the chief medical officers of all of Nevada's hospitals to get their assessment of our current situation and most responsible next steps. They have advised that the most effective course of action is to direct all Nevadans to stay home and for all nonessential businesses to close to the public for 30 days.

My ultimate goal here is to come together as Nevadans to save lives. That requires aggressive strategies aimed at mitigating community spread. Medical professionals have made it abundantly clear that there is currently no treatment. While a vaccine is being developed, we don't have time to waste. At this time, we must act aggressively and decisively to protect ourselves, our families, and our community. The following COVID-19 risk mitigation policies are proven to be effective at reducing death and illness and slowing down the rate of transition in prior pandemics:

- All Nevadans must ensure that 6 feet of social distancing per person for non-family members is maintained.*
- Only essential services should remain open -- such as fire, police, transit, and health care services, in addition to businesses that provide food, shelter, or social services for disadvantaged populations.*
- Non-essential services such as beauty shops, barber shops, and nail, tanning, and waxing salons should close until further notice.*
- Only essential businesses should remain open such as, pharmacies, grocery stores, drug and convenience stores, banks and financial institutions, hardware stores, and gas stations. I am asking grocery stores consider special hours for the vulnerable populations*
- All gatherings should be postponed or canceled. This is not the time for sleepovers, playdates, concerts, theater outings, or athletic events. Although you may not be experiencing symptoms at this time, you may be contagious.*

Do not risk your own health or the health of others.

- Many of you will not be in your office or at work over the next few weeks. This is not a vacation and it's not the time to catch up with friends. It's definitely not the time to go to the movies. Every social contact increases your risk of exposure. The bigger the group, the higher your risk.*
- This means that you should stay away from auditoriums, stadiums, arenas, large conference rooms, meeting halls, and cafeterias.*
- I know in times of stress, many of you seek the release that comes from exercise. But this is not the time for you to be in a gym, healthclub, or fitness center. Until the risk goes away, find other ways to exercise such as home workouts, hikes, or other outdoor activities. But as you do so, remember to maintain social distancing from others doing the same.*
- Some events are unavoidable. We still want you to experience the joy of weddings, but this is not the time to bring your friends together -- especially if this will require travel. Consider postponing the celebration to a time when the risk is low or eliminated.*
- For my friends making preparations to say goodbye to loved ones, please limit the attendance at funeral services. Consider outdoor services where the risk of exposure is less than inside*
- This is only common sense. In a time where people are getting sick from simply being near others, this is not the time for gyms to remain open. This is not the time for casinos to remain open. This is not a time for community recreation centers, clubhouses, movie theaters and malls to remain open. If your business brings groups of people together, it should not be open.*
- Although I cannot and will not say that places of worship should be closed, I strongly urge our faith leaders to find ways to deliver to your congregation without bringing them together in person.*
- Charitable food distribution sites, including the meals being distributed to our students in wake of the school closings, along with grocery stores should remain fully open and operational. Food services for healthcare facilities and other essential facilities should remain open. Any buffet or food stations used in charitable food distribution settings should transition to boxed meals or served through gloved staff members or volunteers.*
- Restaurants throughout Nevada, in addition to pubs, wineries, bars, and breweries that include meals provided by a full kitchen should be reduced to serving food only in a drive-thru, take-out or delivery capacity. No dine-in at food establishments should be allowed until further notice. This also includes food courts, coffee shops, catered events, clubs, bowling alleys, and other similar venues in which people congregate for the consumption of food or beverages.*

Pubs, wineries, bars, and breweries that do not include meals provided by a full kitchen must close.

To summarize: I am telling nonessential businesses you have two choices:

- 1. Find a way to service your customers through delivery, drive through, curbside pickup or front door pickup, or*
- 2. close your doors*

These COVID-19 Risk Mitigation measures will be fully effective as of noon tomorrow.

And additionally, today, in consultation with Gaming Control Board Chair Sandra Douglass-Morgan, I announced that all gaming machines, devices, tables, games, and any equipment related to gaming activity will be shut down effective midnight tonight. Restaurants and bars located within gaming properties will be subject to the same restrictions as those outlined above.

Finally, we will ensure that there is as little disruption as possible to transportation and the supply chain in Nevada during this time. Truck stops and truck service centers will remain open so that motor carriers will be able to deliver supplies as needed.

I know there will be some who don't agree with this decision, some who will think this is an overreaction. I want you to know, I have spent countless hours working with medical experts, the White House, the CDC, labor and industry leaders and I fully believe that this is an appropriate and informed reaction.

We have many vulnerable populations in the state of Nevada and we have a shared responsibility to protect the elderly, the healthcare workers, and all of our first responders.

I know the impacts of this decision will reach far and wide into the homes and lives of our Nevada families. This was not an easy decision to make. But in the last few days, groups and entities across Nevada have stepped up. Their efforts during this difficult time will make this storm easier to weather.

In less than 24 hours, the Nevada Department of Agriculture set up more than 70 sites across our great state so that children impacted by school closures could continue to receive free meals.

Charter Communications announced they'd be offering free access to Spectrum Broadband and provide Wi-Fi for students.

The Silver State Health Exchange also took swift action, announcing a limited-time enrollment period. There's no better time than right now to take proactive steps to ensure your health in the future.

And Las Vegas Justice Court has announced they are suspending all eviction proceedings at this time.

I want to thank utility agencies like NV Energy, Southwest Gas, the Las Vegas Valley Water District, the Truckee Meadows Water Authority and many others for agreeing to suspend utility disconnections during this time

Our cities, counties and state agencies have done tremendous work to limit the public's exposure while continuing to do the public's business.

Also, the Nevada Department of Employment Training & Rehabilitation encourages all Nevadans who have lost their jobs to file unemployment insurance claims online. The state has prepared for an expected increase by extending call center hours for individuals who cannot access these services online.

There are many other examples of selfless Nevadan individuals and businesses who have taken extraordinary measures in these extraordinary times. I thank you all for your dedication and I know that together, Nevada will get through this.

We have been working closely with Nevada's bipartisan Congressional Delegation and I want to thank them for their help, both in recent days and in advance as we continue this work — Nevada needs and appreciates their leadership and hard work.

Through the Families First Coronavirus Response Act — which will become law as soon as the Senate passes and the President signs it — our Delegation has helped amplify our calls for ensuring appropriate testing for Nevadans and trying to ensure that our health agencies have access to the testing, protective supplies, and life-saving equipment that are necessary to protect both patients and our doctors and nurses.

I also appreciate that the Families First Act will be providing expanded emergency paid leave, two weeks of paid sick leave, and up to three months of paid family and medical leave, and funding for nutrition assistance programs and school meals.

We know that more will need to be done when the coronavirus pandemic has passed to get our economy back on its feet and people traveling again. In the meantime, I hope Congress will support direct cash grants to people of all walks of life so that families can keep putting food on the table, paying their rent, and

keeping their lives together.

We have too many people living paycheck to paycheck as it is and we know that the pandemic will make the odds longer for many.

To calm any fears or rumors, I also wanted to note that the National Guard has not been activated. However, as they always are, they stand at the ready to assist with community support if and when they are called upon.

I know this directive will cause many of our friends and neighbors to distress. But I ask you – what are you willing to do to save your own life and the lives of those you love? We absolutely must take this step for every Nevadan's health and safety. Please – take this seriously. Lives are at stake, and with each passing day, this pandemic is growing. Please – Stay Home for Nevada.

I ask all our businesses who must remain open to consider hiring those who will be out of work for the next few weeks. Delivery services will need drivers. Call centers need people to handle increased volume. Stores need people to restock shelves.

Please join me in thanking our heroes who continue to put themselves in harm's way to keep us safe – our first responders and our medical community, who selflessly sacrifice their own safety for all of us. Please – stay home for them.

Let's show the rest of the world our spirit, our sense of community, and our resolve to help each other and overcome obstacles in the most difficult times. We are strong and resilient. We will get through this.

I want to note, this is likely my last press conference in person, to protect my staff and members of the media. We will continue to update all of our Nevadans through other methods, including videos, emails and at the dedicated Nevada Health Response website, nvhealthresponse.nv.gov.

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Contact

Meghin Delaney

Public Information

Officer

mdelaney@nvhealthresponse.nv.gov

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