

Washington State Coronavirus Response (COVID-19)

Three additional Washington counties approved for early move to next phase of reopening

May 11, 2020

Today Washington State Secretary of Health John Wiesman approved applications from Wahkiakum, Skamania, and Stevens counties to move into Phase 2 of Gov. Jay Inslee's [Safe Start plan](#).

This brings the total to 8 counties. Last week, Secretary Wiesman approved variances for Columbia, Garfield, Lincoln, Ferry and Pend Oreille counties.

Businesses in the counties approved to move into Phase 2 must wait to reopen until guidance has been released for their industry on how to keep workers and the public safe. They must comply with all health and safety requirements outlined in that guidance to reopen.

To [apply for a variance](#), counties must have a population of less than 75,000 and no new cases of COVID-19 in the last three weeks. The application process requires support from the local health officer, the local board of health, local hospitals, and the county commission/council.

Each county must demonstrate they have adequate local hospital bed capacity as well as adequate PPE supplies to keep health care workers safe. The application must include plans for:

- Making testing available and accessible to everyone in the county with symptoms

- Staffing case investigations and contact tracing
- Housing people in isolation or quarantine who can't or don't want to do so at home
- Providing case management services to those in isolation and quarantine
- Responding rapidly to outbreaks in congregate settings.

The variance requests are reviewed by the secretary of health, who can approve the plans as submitted, approve with modifications or deny the application. If circumstances change within the jurisdiction, the variance can be revoked.

The state is still considering additional options to support different regional needs in reopening. Learn more about county variances and the statewide response to COVID-19 at coronavirus.wa.gov.

Governor Inslee

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