

[TV Schedules](#)[Radio Schedules](#)[Listen/Stream](#)[Donate](#)

Whitman County Approved For Phase 2 Reopening As More COVID-19 Cases Identified

By [Courtney Flatt](#)  May 15, 2020



File photo. Pullman is Whitman County's largest city, with Washington State University and students making up a major part of the economy and spending in downtown businesses and restaurants. That largely changed when WSU announced it would move to online only instruction in March, even before statewide coronavirus closures happened. CREDIT: Murrow News 8

READ ON



Whitman County will now enter Phase 2 of Gov. Jay Inslee's [Safe Start reopening plan](#). The [application was approved Friday](#), just a day after Whitman County [announced its first positive COVID-19 test](#) since April 22.

The news came the same day the county announced another positive case, bringing Whitman's total to two new cases and at least 18 positive cases since the pandemic began.

County health officials say the positive test results will be monitored, but they haven't affected the reopening plan. Under Phase 2, restaurants can open at 50% capacity. Other



businesses such as beauty salons, pet grooming and retail stores can also open with restrictions.

Troy Henderson, Whitman County's director of public health, said coronavirus hasn't gone away, and people still need to follow social distancing guidelines.

"The fact that we can go sit down in restaurants in reduced numbers is a great thing," Henderson said. "But people still need to have some personal responsibility and understand that they still need to take some basic precautions."

Precautions like staying six feet away from others, [washing your hands frequently](#) and [wearing masks in public](#).

More Stringent Measures Possible

Phase 2 also allows small groups of up to five people to gather.

People who are 65 or older, have chronic health conditions, like diabetes or lung and heart disease, or live in a nursing home are still recommended to limit their time around others.

Businesses that have been approved to open under Phase 2 must wait until the state issues guidelines for that particular industry, according to state officials.



Henderson said if infections start “spiraling out of control,” more stringent social distancing restrictions could be reinstated. Those orders could come from the governor’s office, the Washington Secretary of Health, the Whitman County Board of Health or the Whitman County Health Officer.

Whitman is the ninth county in Washington to enter Phase 2. Counties with fewer than 75,000 residents and no new COVID-19 cases in three weeks can apply to move forward with [the governor’s phased reopening](#).

Counties already approved to move into Phase 2 include: Columbia, Garfield, Lincoln, Ferry, Pend Oreille, Skamania, Stevens and Wahkiakum. Kittitas County is still under review after health officials there “paused” the application to [investigate and respond to an outbreak at an Ellenburg food processing plant](#).

Cases Connected, Tracing Contacts

All Washington counties [surrounding Spokane County](#) have been cleared for Phase 2. Spokane County is still in Phase 1 after state officials [denied its early reopening application Thursday](#).

Like Spokane County, other more populated counties across Washington are moving into Phase 1 of the governor’s plan. Phase 1 includes opening [some outdoor recreation](#) and curbside



retail service.

Each phase will last at least three weeks. [Data from hospitalizations and COVID-19 deaths will drive](#) when the state moves onto each successive phase. No dates are set as to when each new phase will begin.

[So far, Whitman County](#) has reported 18 positive cases and 823 negative cases.

This week's two new cases in Whitman County are connected, Henderson said – one new case reported Thursday and a close contact of that person. Both are women, age 20 to 39, who are isolating at home.

The county is tracing contacts for both cases, said Bill Tensfeld, director Whitman County Emergency Management.

“As we go into Phase 2, you still want to maintain your social distancing, be aware of your potential contacts and follow the guidelines the best you can,” Tensfeld said.

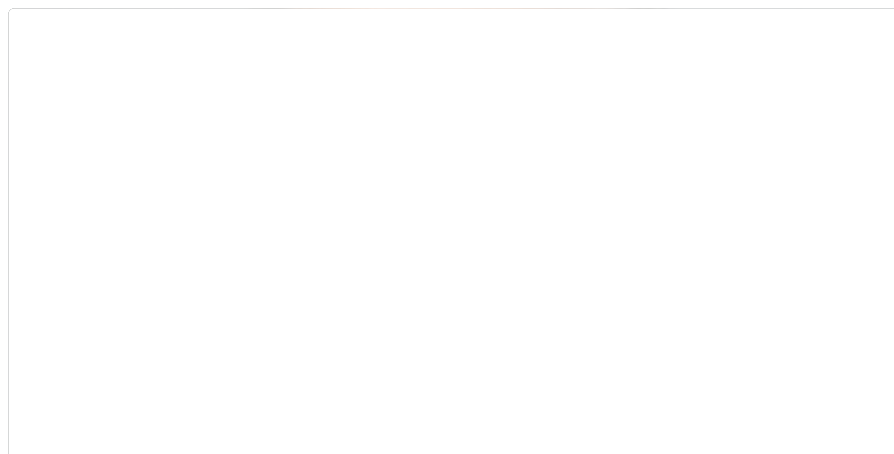
Whitman County's contact tracing can usually be done in under six hours, Henderson said. He expects more related COVID-19 cases to pop up from these two, as will more cases as the county re-opens.



“The fact that a lot of people have been self-quarantined to their homes greatly reduces that size of the list of people who may have been in contact with (a person who tests positive),” Henderson said. “Even if you have the same number of cases moving forward, there’s an anticipation that the number of people that folks will have come in contact with will grow.”

Counties that have skipped to Phase 2 cannot move on to Phase 3 of the [Safe Start plan](#) without approval from the state Health Department. Phase 3 would include outdoor gatherings of less than 50 people and the limited capacity opening of movie theaters and gyms.

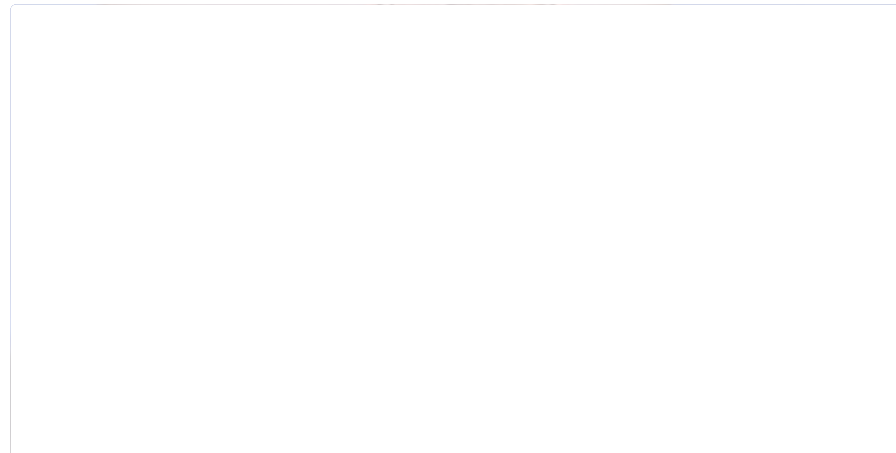
RELATED STORIES:



Gov. Jay Inslee Names Texas Doctor Umair Shah As Washington's Next Health Secretary

Since 2013, Shah has been executive director of Harris County Public Health in Houston, Texas. He will replace outgoing Secretary John Wiesman who has served in the position since 2013. Previously, Wiesman announced his plan to leave the post at the end of the year to take a teaching job in North Carolina. [Continue Reading Gov. Jay Inslee Names Texas Doctor Umair Shah As Washington's Next Health Secretary](#)

Austin Jenkins • November 17, 2020

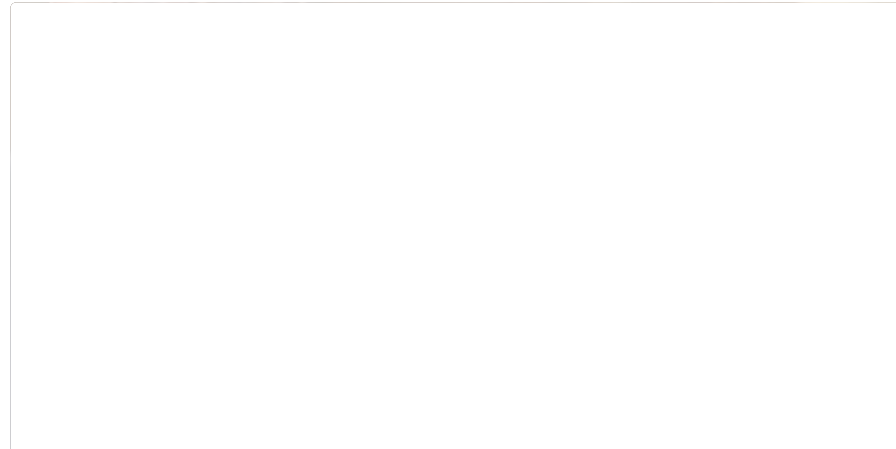


Washington Governor Announces:
Bars, Restaurants Closed Again; Most
Indoor Gatherings Banned



“We are today in a more dangerous position than we were in March when our first stay-home order was issued,” Gov. Jay Inslee said during a Sunday press conference. “In March, we were heading into the summer months. And we were largely successful relative to other states because of the combination that we acted early we did not wait,” he added. [Continue Reading Washington Governor Announces: Bars, Restaurants Closed Again; Most Indoor Gatherings Banned](#)

NWPB News • November 15, 2020



Gov. Jay Inslee And First Lady Trudi Urge A Change To Thanksgiving Plans As COVID Cases Climb

The latest COVID situation report shows the transmission rate of the virus is now well above one meaning one sick person is likely to spread it to more than one other person. In addition, hospitalizations are on the rise on both sides of the



Cascades. Health experts are especially concerned about the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday. [Continue Reading Gov. Jay Inslee And First Lady Trudi Urge A Change To Thanksgiving Plans As COVID Cases Climb](#)

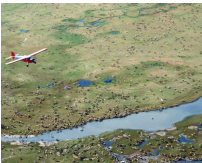
Scott Leadingham • November 12, 2020

TAGS: [Colfax](#) [coronavirus](#) [covid-19](#) [Public Health](#) [Pullman](#) [Whitman County](#)

RECENT POSTS



Gov. Jay Inslee Names Texas Doctor Umair Shah As Washington’s Next Health Secretary
November 17, 2020

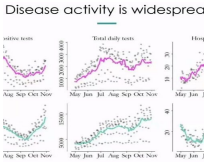


Trump Administration Rushes To Sell Oil Rights In Arctic National Wildlife Refuge
November 17, 2020



‘Traverse Talks’ Episode 5: Pulitzer Winner Jericho Brown On The Importance Of Name And Truth
November 17, 2020





Health Officials Ask 300 Ritzville-Area Attendees To Isolate After COVID Cases Linked To Wedding
November 17, 2020



Music Of 'America's Composer' Aaron Copland Plays On In A Tiny Desk (Home) Concert
November 17, 2020



Panic Buying, Washington Businesses Close For Good As New COVID Restrictions Loom
November 16, 2020



Northwest Public Broadcasting

Watch Online

Listen Online

Download KTNW Schedule

Download KWSU Schedule

Public Inspection Files



About Us

Contact Information

Jobs

Internships

Public Documents

Who We Are

Coverage Area

Support Us

Pledge Today

Leadership Circle

Vehicle Donation

Estate Planning

Business Support & Community

Sponsor

A community service of the Edward R. Murrow College of Communication at
Washington State University.

PO Box 642530 | Pullman, WA 99164

E-Mail: info@nwpb.org | Phone: 1-800-842-8991 | Fax: 1-509-335-3772

[Editorial Policy](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Use](#)

