

NEWS RELEASE

Panhandle
Public Health District

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For immediate release

For more information, contact:

Kim Engel, Director, 308-760-2415, kengel@pphd.org

Unified Command updates screening guidelines for persons that have recently traveled outside the Nebraska Panhandle

Goal with postponements, cancellations, and updated screening guidelines is to prevent COVID-19 spread and not overwhelm hospitals and clinics

Important COVID-19 information for persons that have traveled outside the Nebraska Panhandle. If you are returning to the Panhandle from a community experiencing community transmission or known community spread, please call Panhandle Public Health District at 308-262-5764 before returning to the Panhandle. You will need to self-quarantine and complete monitoring for 14 days; you will receive more guidance once you have made the call.

If you are not sure if the community you are returning from is experiencing community spread, currently it is Washington, California, and New York, please visit the following links they are updated daily:

- **United States:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-in-us.html>, scroll down to the map of state reporting cases of COVID-19 to CDC, hover over the state you are returning from, if it says Community Transmission: **Yes, self-report.**
- **Outside the US:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>, scroll down to the map that says Search COVID-19 risk assessment by country. If you are returning from a country with Widespread Sustained Spread: **Yes, self-report.**
- If you were at a state or country that is undetermined, but you know there is community spread in the city you were visiting: **Yes, self-report.**

This will take each person doing their part to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Many cancellations and postponements have been announced with the goal to “flatten the curve” so our hospitals and clinics are able to help our neighbors, family, and friends if and when they need care.

Putting a distance between yourself and other people helps stop the spread of COVID-19. This is especially important for people who are at higher risk of getting very sick including:

- Older adults
- People who have serious chronic medical conditions like:
 - Heart disease
 - Diabetes
 - Lung disease

The risk for contracting COVID-19 remains low in the Panhandle. There are no known cases at this time.

We recommend that you call Panhandle Public Health District at 308-262-5764 if you develop a fever and symptoms of respiratory illness, such as cough or difficulty breathing, and have been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19 or have recently traveled to an area with ongoing spread.

Public health will screen you and if medical attention is needed will make arrangements for testing. Do not go directly to the clinic or hospital. It is important that health care providers know you are coming so that proper precautions can be in place.

People can help protect themselves from COVID-19 and other respiratory infections by:

- **Washing hands often with soap and water** for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water aren't available, use an alcohol-based sanitizer.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth** with unwashed hands.
- **Avoid close contact with sick people and stay home if you are sick.** Social distancing has been key in reducing spread.
- **Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze** then throw the tissue in the trash.
- **Clean and disinfect frequently** touched objects and surfaces.

The CDC does NOT currently recommend the general public use facemasks.

Panhandle Public Health District will keep you posted in this quickly changing environment. We continue to monitor the unfolding COVID-19 epidemic to anticipate its impact on the Panhandle. We are working as a unified command with Region 21, 22, and 23 Emergency Managers, and Scotts Bluff County Health Department on this evolving situation. We will continue to communicate important updates to the public and our partners. The CDC is putting out updated guidance daily; for the most up to date information visit:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>. To learn more about COVID-19, go to <https://www.cdc.gov/covid19>.

Panhandle Public Health District is working together to improve the health, safety, and quality of life for all who live, learn, work and play in the Panhandle. Our vision is that we are a healthier and safer Panhandle Community. Visit our website www.pphd.org.