

May 19, 2020
2:00 PM
Big Horn County
COVID-19 Update/Response

For Immediate Release

After all of the efforts of many principals, superintendents, teachers, county and state officials who put together plans for graduation that would keep our county safe, while allowing a celebration for our seniors, some people chose to ignore public health orders following graduation ceremonies. This type of behavior nearly jeopardized the plans for other schools as we contemplated how to proceed with planned ceremonies that would not further risk our citizens. What a tragic capstone that would be to cause a resurgence of this disease for a senior class picture. Big Horn County officials were disheartened to see social media posts that seemingly disregarded current public health orders. While there was probably no intentional disregard we asking everyone to be mindful of the safety of our entire community.

We want to start to relax the restrictions, but if this is the kind of voluntary support we see, it will be difficult to gain future exemptions from the county and the state. Our team will continue to consider every opportunity to reopen with well-crafted plans that adhere to present guidelines.

We are all stir crazy. Believe me I really want to open up all the places I am missing. I miss social gatherings. Heck, I just want to have my Dungeons and Dragons buddies over for our weekly game again. I want to eat out with friends at the same table. I want to have a party on our new deck. I want to invite all our kids up for our Annual Memorial Day Weekend card tournament and family celebration. I want to go to summer camp with the scouts. I want to eat a hot dog and watch a baseball

game. I want to do parades and rodeos and car shows and county fairs and shake hands again. But I can't do that, because I take care of sick people and they depend on me to make them better, NOT SICKER. And all of you are depending on our team to get you to a better place, NOT SICKER.



Twenty-three county health officers meet every week to discuss the data with Dr. Harrist. We carefully discuss how to move forward to a graduated return to all those activities we enjoy without causing a crisis that would overload our hospitals and endanger our most vulnerable citizens. None of us like government restrictions. That's why I live in Wyoming instead of Suburban Washington, DC with a

homeowner's association telling me when I have to put my trash out, what my fence has to look like and when to cut my grass. That's why the Governor didn't issue a Stay at Home Order.

I am reminded of my favorite Christmas movie "Scrooge." Ebenezer Scrooge says, "Let them die and decrease the surplus population!" We have heard some saying this about COVID. We forget what the Ghost of Christmas Present says, "Mankind should be our business, Ebenezer, but we seldom attend to it." I am going to ask you all to consider your choices, because we can't separate our choices from the consequences that come with them. As my mother often said, "When you pick up one end of the stick, you pick up the other." We have to move forward with the presumption that people care about their fellowmen and will act responsibly in this crisis. Our team will continue to do all in our power to facilitate responsible choices.

So where are we with the latest?

- 577 confirmed cases with 17,661 tests
- +189 probable cases
- 504 total recovered
 - (367 confirmed, 137 probable)
- 10 COVID-19 related deaths



SECOND CONFIRMED CASE IN PARK COUNTY

The 2nd case of COVID-19 in Park County was confirmed in Powell last night. The patient was not hospitalized but is quarantined at home. This case appears to have been imported from out of state.

Over the last several days **5 staff members and 4 residents of a nursing home in Washakie County have tested positive for COVID-19.** This is a reminder that we must continue to work to protect our vulnerable populations, namely those over 65 and/or with underlying health conditions.

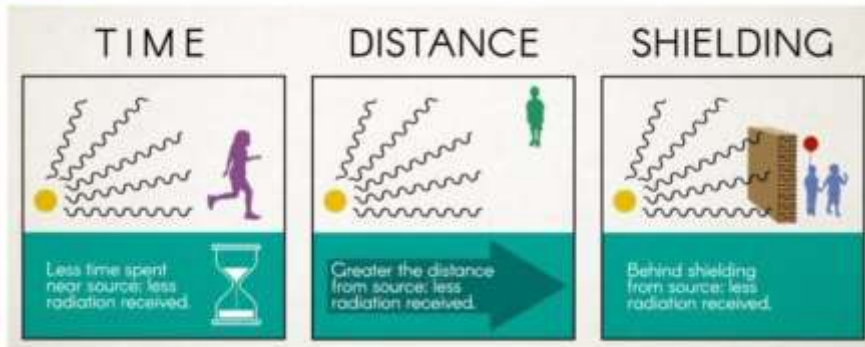
What about face coverings?

As physicians, we wear cloth masks for meetings with other providers in the hospital to protect our colleagues and then switch to the surgical masks to protect our patients. Then we wear N95s or PAPRs to protect ourselves from patients that we suspect may be infected. But barriers work both ways to reduce possibility of spread.



I have discussed in a previous briefing when dealing with nuclear, biologic and chemical threats the cardinal principles are TDS (time distance and shielding.) We are using same principles here with reducing exposure time - staying home, social distancing and face coverings. Some have correctly pointed out that face coverings will not filter viruses if you strictly look at hole size. But remember physics and random "Brownian motion." These viral particles are not bullets targeted at the holes, they are randomly oriented in both speed and orientation to those holes. If you ever played PONG, you may remember how hard it was to get the ball on other side of the wall.

RADIATION EXPOSURE AND HOW NOT TO DIE FROM IT



We are also not trying to keep every single viral particle out of your system. The body is quite capable of handling a very small viral exposure and dispatching it and sometimes does so without even becoming infected and mounting a system wide immune response. We are trying to protect against an

overwhelming viral burden attacking your body and causing it to start reproducing the virus and infecting your body and other people. Sort of an individual "flattening the curve" for your own body.

As we see cases increasing in counties surrounding us, let's take care to do the time, distance and shielding we know will keep us all safe.

"If it's ALL ABOUT ME, then we will ACT IRRESPONSIBLY"

Respectfully,
David Weston, Fairbanks, MD, FAAFP
Big Horn County Health Officer
and the entire
Big Horn County Incident Management Team



For Sources of Information on COVID-19:

1. Big Horn County Public Health Website:
<https://www.bighorncountywy.gov>
<https://www.bighorncountywy.gov/departments/public-health>
2. Big Horn County COVID-19 INFORMATION LINE 307-568-4031
Or Email us @ covid-19@bighorncountywy.gov
3. Park County Public Health Coronavirus Information Line: 754-1870 or 527-1870
(Updated regularly). Big Horn County may use this.
4. Up to date announcements from Wyoming Department of Health as they are released Wyoming Department of Health
Website: <https://health.wyo.gov/publichealth/infectious-disease-epidemiology-unit/disease/novel-coronavirus>.

5. CDC Website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/index.html>
6. Wyoming Department of Health State Orders: <https://health.wyo.gov/publichealth/infectious-disease-epidemiology-unit/disease/novel-coronavirus/covid-19-orders-and-guidance/>

