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**Contact:** [Jessica Baggett](#), Communications, 360-789-0058

## **Whitman County approved to move into Phase 3 of Gov. Jay Inslee's Safe Start plan**

**OLYMPIA** -- Today Washington State Secretary of Health John Wiesman approved Whitman County to move into Phase 3 of Gov. Jay Inslee's [Safe Start plan](#). Yesterday Clark, Okanogan, Pierce, Skagit, Snohomish and Whatcom counties were approved to move from Phase 1 to Phase 2. King County was approved to move into a modified version of Phase 1 and Columbia, Ferry, Garfield, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Stevens and Wahkiakum counties were approved to move from Phase 2 to Phase 3.

A total of five counties are in Phase 1, one county is in a modified version of Phase 1, 25 counties are in Phase 2 and eight counties are in Phase 3. Chelan and Douglas counties submitted an application yesterday to move into a modified Phase 1 which is currently under review by the department.

Businesses approved to move into a new phase must comply with all health and safety requirements outlined in the [guidance to reopen](#).

On May 29, Governor Jay Inslee, in collaboration with the Washington State Department of Health, established a [data-driven approach](#) to reopen Washington and modify social and recreational activities while minimizing the health impacts of COVID-19. Washington will move through the [phased reopening](#) county-by-county, allowing for flexibility and local control to address COVID-19 activity geographically.

This approach reduces the risk of COVID-19 to Washington's most vulnerable populations and preserves capacity in our health care system, while safely opening up businesses and resuming gatherings, travel, shopping and recreation. The plan allows counties and the secretary of health to holistically review COVID-19 activity and the ability for the county to respond when determining if a county is ready to move into a new phase.

To apply to move to the next phase, counties must submit an application to the Washington State Department of Health. The application process requires support from the local health officer, the local board of health and the county executive or county commission.

Each county must demonstrate they have adequate local hospital bed capacity as well as adequate PPE supplies to keep health care workers safe. The metric goals for moving between phases are intended to be applied as targets, not hardline measures. Where one target is not fully achieved, actions taken with a different target may offset a county's overall risk. Some of the metrics the secretary of health will evaluate in addition to other information provided by counties include:

- COVID-19 activity: The ideal target for new cases will be 25 or fewer per 100,000 residents over a 14-day period. Hospitalizations for COVID should be flat or decreasing.

- Healthcare system readiness: The available hospital beds in a given jurisdiction would preferably be at less than 80% occupancy.
- Testing: Counties should show they have adequate testing capacity, 50 times as many people per day as they have confirmed new cases per day – which equates to positive test results under 2%. They also need to show rapid turnaround time for test results, ensuring that we can work effectively to contain the virus.
- Case and contact investigations: The goal is to contact 90 percent of cases by phone or in person within 24 hours of receipt of a positive lab test result. There is also a goal of reaching all that person’s contacts within 48 hours of a positive test result. Additionally, there are goals to make contact with each case and contact during their home isolation or quarantine to help ensure their success.
- Protecting high-risk populations: The ideal number of outbreaks reported by week – defined as two or more non-household cases where transmission occurred at work, in congregate living, or in an institutional setting – is zero for counties under 75,000, and no higher than three for our largest counties.
- Additional information is available [in the governor's plan](#).

Requests to move into the next phase are reviewed by the secretary of health, who can approve the plan as submitted, approve with modifications or deny the application. If circumstances change within the jurisdiction, the secretary of health can modify the current phase or move the county back into an earlier phase. A county can also identify when they need to return to an earlier phase or eliminate approved activities.

Learn more about reopening and the statewide response to COVID-19 at [coronavirus.wa.gov](https://coronavirus.wa.gov). Individuals can also find COVID-19 information on the [Department of Health's website](#) or call 1-800-525-0127. Individuals can text the word “coronavirus” to 211-211 to receive information and updates on their phone wherever they are.

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