

July 2, 2020

This is Susan Long with the Osage County Health Department in Linn. I wanted to provide an update to you on what's been going on since my last update. Unfortunately, today, we received 2 new COVID cases. This gives Osage County a total of 9 laboratory confirmed COVID cases. One of the new cases is community-acquired, meaning we couldn't link it to a known case. Our other case is travel-related to one of the "hot spots" in the U.S. The close contacts were identified and are quarantining as are the 2 cases.

Most of the Osage County cases and contact exposures have occurred outside of the county, but this does not mean that people don't need to continue to be careful. I've been dismayed to see the stories about the huge outbreaks in new "hot spots". Stories where I see people blatantly going around without masks and who have total disregard for social distancing which has caused these spikes in cases. Younger people are being diagnosed with COVID in huge numbers all over the country including here in Missouri.

While the State and Osage County are no longer under orders, the County is under specific guidelines which are designed to offer direction to the various business types. I am continuing to meet with the school officials so that there is consistency in returning to school in August. A meeting is being planned with State Technical College of Missouri staff next week to discuss coming back to school on campus. The County Fair Chairman has been talking with us in an effort to make the fair being held next week as safe as they can.

What is troubling, is that many individuals are not being safe. I'm not seeing masks on most people when in buildings or crowds, especially the elderly at this point. I'm seeing little to no effort to social distance even though I still see the marks on the floors. It is EVERY PERSON'S responsibility and duty to stay 6 feet apart from others if they aren't in your household. Otherwise, WEAR A MASK! I'd like to remind businesses that it is OK to stress these things in your businesses by signage and thanking customers when they do have a mask on and are abiding by the guidelines. With a 3 day weekend approaching, I want to remind you that everyone needs to be safe. I also want to strongly emphasize to travelers, especially to "hot spot" areas, that you should practice all preventative measures while there and you should self-quarantine for 2 weeks upon your return. Believe me, the health department is getting calls about this because the public can see posts on Instagram, Facebook, etc. about what you did on your trip. A lot of the county may know where you went, what you did and what you are not doing once you got home!

WE ALL have to share in the responsibility to keep ourselves AND others safe. It is vital to the control of this disease and other diseases that we are distancing AND/OR are wearing masks.

Thank you.