

HEALTH OFFICER'S ORDER NO. 20-060

March 17, 2020

RE: Order of the Health Officer on Events during Declaration of Public Health
Emergency

WHEREAS, on January 20, 2020, the Snohomish Health District activated its District Operations Center to manage their response to the nation's first case of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, on January 31, 2020, the United States Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar declared a public health emergency for COVID-19, beginning January 27, 2020; and

WHEREAS, on February 29, 2020, Governor Jay Inslee proclaimed a state of emergency within the State of Washington due to COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, on March 4, 2020, Snohomish County Executive Dave Somers proclaimed a state of emergency within Snohomish County due to COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, on March 4, 2020, Snohomish County Health Officer's Order 20-056 declared a public health emergency in the county due to COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, on March 10, 2020, the Snohomish Health District Board of Health adopted Resolution No. 20-06 declaring a public health emergency; and

WHEREAS, on March 11, 2020, Snohomish County Health Officer's Order 20-059 declared a public health emergency in the county due to COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, on March 15, 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued interim guidance recommending the cancellation or postponement of in-person events consisting of 50 or more people due to COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, on March 16, Governor Jay Inslee issued proclamations (1) prohibiting any gathering of greater than 50 people, (2) reinforcing previously declared requirements for smaller gatherings, and (3) prohibiting any number of people from gathering in any public venue in which people congregate for purposes of public entertainment, recreation, food and beverage service, theater, bowling, fitness, and other similar activities, to include all public venues in which the serving, provision, or consumption of prepared food or beverages occurs at a table, bar, or for consumption within; and

WHEREAS, state law, RCW 70.05.070(2),(3), requires and empowers the local health officer to take such action as is necessary to maintain health and to control and prevent the spread of any contagious or infectious diseases within the jurisdiction; and

WHEREAS, state regulation, WAC 246-100-036, requires the local health officer, when necessary, to institute disease control and containment control measures, including social distancing measures he or she deems necessary based on his or her professional judgment; and

WHEREAS, there is evidence of increasing transmission of COVID-19 within Snohomish County, scientific evidence, and national public health guidance regarding strategies to slow the transmission of COVID-19, including the need to protect vulnerable members of the public from avoidable risk of serious illness or death resulting from exposure to COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, the age, condition, and health of a significant portion of the population of Snohomish County places it at risk for serious health complications, including death, from COVID-19. Although most individuals who contract COVID-19 do not become seriously ill, persons with mild symptoms and asymptomatic persons with COVID-19 may place other vulnerable members of the public at significant risk; and

WHEREAS, a large surge in the number of persons with serious infections can compromise the ability of the regional healthcare system to deliver necessary healthcare to the public; and

WHEREAS, the implementation of limitations on large gatherings and use of social distancing decreases the risk of COVID-19 transmission to our most vulnerable populations and is especially important for people who are over 60 years old and those with chronic health conditions due to the higher risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, this Order will reduce the likelihood that many individuals will be exposed to COVID-19 at community events and gatherings and at certain retail establishments, and will thereby slow the spread of COVID-19 in our community; and

WHEREAS, this Order will help preserve critical and limited healthcare capacity in the county by reducing the spread of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, this Order is issued in accordance with, and incorporates by reference, the March 11, 2020, Governor's Executive Proclamation on COVID-19 Community Mitigation Strategies and March 16, 2020, Governor's Executive Proclamations 20-13 and 20-14 imposing limits on gatherings, food and beverage services, and areas of congregation; and

WHEREAS, this Order is issued in light of the existence of 257 cases of COVID-19 (including 6 deaths) in Snohomish County as of March 16, 2020, and a significant and increasing number of assumed cases of community transmission occurring at a time when implementation of large-scale community mitigation measures are recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; and

WHEREAS, because social distancing measures can reduce COVID-19 transmission by decreasing the frequency and duration of social contact among persons of all ages; and

WHEREAS, this Order is issued to prevent circumstances often present in bars, dance clubs, movie theatres, and other social and recreational venues that may exacerbate the spread of COVID-19, such as: (a) a physical environment in which people are in close proximity and have multiple opportunities for close contact with one another that facilitates the spread of COVID-19 and; (b) the difficulty in tracing exposure and implementing traditional public health containment measures; and

WHEREAS, although many residents and businesses followed the voluntary retail guidance issued by the Snohomish Health District on March 11, 2020, confirmed COVID-19 cases have increased four-fold, reflecting both greater testing capacity and also ongoing community transmission of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, this Order comes after the release of substantial guidance from the Washington State Department of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and other public health officials throughout the United States and around the world. The Local Health Officer will continue to assess this quickly evolving situation and may modify or extend this Order or issue additional Orders related to COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, the Local Health Officer hereby finds it is necessary to institute social distancing measures within Snohomish County.

NOW, THEREFORE, it is hereby DECLARED and ORDERED as follows, effective immediately, March 17, 2020:

All events or public venue gatherings of 50 or greater attendees are prohibited until further notice.

Until further notice, events or public venue gatherings with fewer than 50 attendees are prohibited unless event organizers take the following steps to mitigate and minimize risk:

- Older adults and individuals with underlying medical conditions that may increase the risk of serious COVID-19 are encouraged not to attend (including employees); and
- Social distancing recommendations must be met (i.e., people staying 6 feet from each other, aside from momentary and minimal contact at closer distances only when absolutely necessary);
- Employees must be screened for coronavirus symptoms each day and excluded if symptomatic; and
- Proper hand hygiene and sanitation must be readily available to all attendees and employees; and
- Environmental cleaning guidelines from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are followed (e.g., clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces daily or more frequently).

Furthermore, the onsite consumption of food and/or beverages is prohibited in any public venue, including but not limited to, the following venues, through 11:59 p.m. on March 31, 2020, unless extended beyond that date by subsequent order:

Restaurants
Food courts
Bars
Taverns
Coffee shops
Catered events
Clubs
Bowling alleys
All other similar venues in which people congregate for the consumption of food or beverages.

This order does not prohibit the sale of prepared food or beverages that are otherwise legally delivered or taken out of the venue for consumption or the purchasing of groceries that are not consumed within the premises, more commonly known as drive-through, take-out, and delivery services.

Also prohibited are the operation of public venues in which people congregate for entertainment, social or recreational purposes, including but not limited to bowling alleys, gymnasiums, fitness centers, athletic clubs, card rooms, barbershops and hair/nail salons, tattoo parlors, pool halls, and other similar venues. This prohibition shall remain in effect until 11:59 p.m. on March 31, 2020, unless extended beyond that date by subsequent order.

For the purposes of this order, an "event" is defined as a public gathering for business, social, or recreational activities including, but not limited to, community, civic, public,

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leisure, or sporting events; parades; concerts; festivals; conventions; fundraisers; and similar activities.

For the purposes of this order, “public venue” has its ordinary meaning and also includes, but is not limited to, social clubs, private clubs, tennis clubs, golf clubs, faith-based organizations/facilities, and other similar venues.

This order does not apply to a broad range of businesses and services, including but not limited to, veterinary care services, grocery stores, pharmacies, convenience stores, gas stations, pet stores, and libraries; however, any sit-down food or beverage services with these facilities are prohibited. Exempted from this prohibition are food service operations in health care facilities, shelters for people experiencing homelessness, schools, and educational settings. Nevertheless, such exempted entities should make reasonable efforts to ensure social distancing in the context of providing such services.

Retail stores that elect to continue operation must designate an employee or officer who must establish and implement social distancing and sanitation measures established by the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the Washington State Department of Health; this obligation remains in effect until 11:59 p.m. on March 31, 2020, unless extended beyond that date by subsequent order.

Except as otherwise provided herein, Snohomish County Health Officer’s Order 20-059 shall remain in full force and effect until terminated by subsequent order.

Unless otherwise indicated above, this order shall remain in effect until terminated by subsequent order.



Christopher Spitters, MD, MPH
Health Officer



Date