

COUNTY OF JEFFERSON
State of Washington

In the Matter of Emergency Response to the
COVID-19 Pandemic

PUBLIC HEALTH ORDER— September 02, 2021

BACKGROUND

1. On February 29, 2020, Governor Jay Inslee issued Proclamation [20-05](#), which declared a State of Emergency in all Counties in Washington State to due to the public health emergency caused by the COVID-19 virus.

2. On March 10, 2020, the Jefferson County Health Officer issued a Public Health Order to control and prevent the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

3. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared the outbreak of COVID-19 to be a pandemic.

4. On March 16, 2020, the Jefferson County Board of Commissioners approved a Declaration of Emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

5. On March 23, 2020, Governor Jay Inslee signed Proclamation [20-25](#) declaring that a State of Emergency continues to exist in all Counties in Washington State due to COVID-19. Proclamation [20-25](#) has been amended several times, which limit Washingtonians' ability to participate in certain activities unless certain conditions are met.

6. As a result of the continued worldwide spread of COVID-19, its significant progression in Washington State, and the high risk it poses to our most vulnerable populations, Governor Jay Inslee subsequently issued amendatory proclamations exercising his emergency powers under RCW [43.06.220](#) by prohibiting certain activities and waiving and suspending specified laws and regulations.

7. The Jefferson County Public Health Department has confirmed localized person- to-person spread of COVID-19 in Jefferson County. Given the current understanding about how COVID-19 spreads, including by asymptomatic and pre-symptomatic persons, masks are an essential defense to the spread of COVID-19.

8. Viruses constantly change through mutation, and new variants of a virus are expected to occur over time. Multiple variants of the virus that causes COVID-19 have been documented in the United States and globally during this pandemic. See <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/transmission/variant.html>.

9. COVID-19 vaccines are effective in reducing infection and serious disease, widespread vaccination is the primary means we have as a state to protect everyone, including persons who cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons, youth who are not eligible to receive a vaccine, immunocompromised individuals, and vulnerable persons including persons in health care facilities, long-term care facilities and other congregate care facilities from COVID-19 infections.

10. COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective. COVID-19 vaccines were evaluated in clinical trials involving tens of thousands of participants and met the U.S. Food & Drug Administration's rigorous

scientific standards for safety, effectiveness, and manufacturing quality needed to support emergency use authorization; and, to date, more than 346 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines have been given in the United States with 8.2 million of those doses administered in Washington, and serious safety problems and long-term side effects are rare.

11. After months of improving COVID-19 epidemiological conditions in Washington State, the emergence of highly contagious COVID-19 variants, including the “delta variant” that is at least twice as transmissible as the virus that emerged in late 2019, coupled with the continued significant numbers of unvaccinated people, have caused COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations to rise sharply among unvaccinated populations and have resulted in breakthrough infections in some fully vaccinated individuals.

12. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention stated on July 27, 2021 that to maximize protection from the Delta variant and prevent possibly spreading it to others, wear a mask indoors in public if people are in an area of substantial or high transmission.

13. As of August 4, 2021, nearly 4.4 million Washingtonians, about 70% of those eligible and 58% of the total population, had initiated their vaccine series, leaving 2.1 million eligible Washingtonians who were unvaccinated.

14. On August 12, 2021, Health Officers from all 35 local health jurisdictions in the State of Washington released the following recommendation: “The health officers from all 35 local health jurisdictions in Washington State have joined together to pass on their best public health advice to protect you, your family, and our communities. We recommend all residents wear facial coverings when in indoor public settings where the vaccination status of those around you is unknown. This step will help reduce the risk of COVID-19 to the public, including customers and workers, help stem the increase in COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations in many parts of the state and decrease the spread of the highly contagious Delta variant.”

15. On August 13, 2021, Dr. Allison Berry issued an emergency order requiring masking when in indoor public spaces, offices, and businesses in Clallam and Jefferson Counties.

16. As of August 21, 2021, 495 outbreaks of COVID-19 have been tied traced to restaurants, and bars in Washington State. Localized transmission of COVID-19 and outbreaks related to restaurants and bars have been documented in Jefferson County. Indoor bars and restaurants are known to pose a high risk for COVID-19 transmission as they encourage unmasking of large groups of people indoors.

17. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic there have been waves of increased risk of transmission, requiring the ability to implement stricter mitigations and safety protocols as recommended by public health officials.

AUTHORITY TO ISSUE ORDER

1. RCW [70.05.070](#) vests authority in the Jefferson County Health Officer to take such action as is necessary to maintain health and sanitation; to control and prevent the spread of any dangerous, contagious, or infectious diseases; and to take such measures as deemed necessary in order to promote the public health.

2. WAC [246-100-040\(2\)](#) provides the Jefferson County Health Officer “the powers of police officers, sheriffs, constables, and all other officers and employees of any political subdivisions within the jurisdiction of the health department to enforce immediately orders given to effectuate the purposes of this section in accordance with the provisions of RCW [43.20.050\(4\)](#) and [70.05.120](#).” Under WAC [246-100-](#)

[040\(2\)](#), these powers include Jefferson County's police powers authorized by Wa. Const. art. XI, §11 and RCW [36.32.120\(7\)](#).

3. The preservation of the public health is a proper subject for the exercise of the police power and is the first concern of the state. *State v. Superior Court for King Cty.*, 103 Wash. 409, 419, 174 P. 973, 976 (1918). *See also Medtronic, Inc. v. Lohr*, 518 U.S. 470, 475, 116 S. Ct. 2240, 2245, 135 L. Ed. 2d 700 (1996). A county has the power to quarantine persons with infectious diseases. *City of Seattle v. Cottin*, 144 Wash. 572, 576, 258 P. 520, 521 (1927). Because protecting and preserving the health of its citizens from disease is an important governmental function, public health statutes and the actions of local health boards implementing those statutes are liberally construed. *Spokane Cty. Health Dist. v. Brockett*, 120 Wn.2d 140, 149, 839 P.2d 324, 329 (1992) (citations omitted). The legislatively delegated power to counties and health boards to control contagious diseases gives them extraordinary power which might be unreasonable in another context. *Id.*

4. WAC [246-100-036\(3\)](#) requires the Jefferson County Health Officer, when necessary, to institute disease control and contamination control measures as deemed necessary based on professional judgment, current standards of practice and the best available medical and scientific information.

5. Despite the declaration of emergency and best public health efforts, Jefferson County has continued to experience rising rates of COVID-19 transmission and numerous outbreaks (defined as multiple positive tests for COVID-19 from a single location or event).

6. Jefferson County is currently experiencing ongoing transmission of confirmed COVID-19 cases related primarily to the highly transmissible Delta variant, as are neighboring counties and Washington State as a whole.

7. Rates of COVID-19 transmission and hospitalization have been on the rise throughout the summer of 2021 due to the highly contagious Delta variant, largely in the unvaccinated population. As of August 31, 2021, the hospital in Jefferson County strain experiencing severe strain, while neighboring Clallam County's hospitals are full and 98% of the staffed ICU beds in King, Snohomish and Pierce Counties are full.

8. COVID-19 vaccination continues to prevent hospitalization and save lives. 94% of those hospitalized for COVID-19 in Washington State between February 1, 2021 and August 21, 2021 were not fully vaccinated. 92% of those who have died during that same time period in Washington State were not fully vaccinated.

9. Based on professional judgment of the Jefferson County Health Officer, it is necessary to issue this order requiring the wearing of masks in government offices and businesses, under the limitations listed below.

10. The Health Officer further finds that immediate enforcement of the below COVID-19 safeguards is necessary to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in Jefferson County and for the preservation of public health, safety, and general welfare and lies within the existing authority of the Health Officer.

ORDER

IT IS ORDERED, by the Jefferson County Health Officer that it is necessary that:

1. Effective September 4, 2021 and continuing until the Governor has declared the public emergency related to COVID-19 has ended or until this order is revoked earlier, all persons entering bars and restaurants in Jefferson County must provide proof that they are fully vaccinated against COVID-19, except as provided in Section 2, below.

- a. For purposes of this order, “fully vaccinated” means that a person has received all the required doses of a vaccine for COVID-19 (e.g., two doses of the Moderna or Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines, or one dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine) and 14 days have passed since the final dose.
- b. Acceptable forms of proof of vaccination include a completed CDC vaccination card, a State Department of Health Certificate of COVID-19 Vaccination, a printed copy of the person’s State Department of Health vaccine record, a photograph of any of the preceding, or an app-based vaccine passport.

2. Proof of vaccination is not required in the following scenarios:

- a. Employees of bars and restaurants who do not remove their masks at work are not required to provide proof of vaccination to their employers. Employers continue to be required to comply with all other requirements for employers in the Washington Department of Labor and Industries guidance (<https://www.lni.wa.gov/forms-publications/F414-164-000.pdf>), including the requirement to document the vaccine status of all employees.
- b. Employees of bars and restaurants who are unable to be vaccinated because of a disability or the requirement to do so conflicts with their sincerely held religious beliefs, practice, or observance. Employers:
 - i. Must provide any disability-related reasonable accommodations and sincerely held religious belief accommodations to the requirements of this order that are required under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act), Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII), the Washington Law Against Discrimination (WLAD), and any other applicable law. As provided in the above-noted laws, employers are not required to provide accommodations if they would cause undue hardship to the employer. Reasonable accommodations must be determined on an individualized basis and may include wearing a mask or working remotely. The requirement of wearing a mask is reasonable accommodation for the purposes of this order.
 - ii. Must comply with the procedures required under the above-noted laws and any other applicable law when considering and deciding whether to provide accommodations.
 - iii. Must, to the extent permitted by law, before providing a disability-related reasonable accommodation to the requirements of this order, obtain from the individual requesting the accommodation documentation from an appropriate health care or rehabilitation professional stating that the individual has a disability that necessitates an accommodation and the probable duration of the need for the accommodation.

- iv. Must, to the extent permitted by law, before providing a sincerely held religious belief accommodation to the requirements of this order, document that the request for an accommodation has been made and include a statement from the employee explaining the way in which the requirements of this order conflict with the sincerely held religious belief, practice, or observance of the employee.
 - v. Are prohibited from providing accommodations: (1) That they know are based on false, misleading, or dishonest grounds or information; (2) That they know are based on the personal preference of the individual and not on an inability to get vaccinated because of a disability or a conflict with a sincerely held religious belief, practice, or observance; or, (3) Without conducting an individualized assessment and determination of each individual's need and justification for an accommodation; i.e., "rubberstamping" accommodation requests.
- c. Children under 12 who are not yet eligible for COVID-19 vaccination are not required to prove vaccination status in bars or restaurants.

3. In addition, individuals in Jefferson County must abide by any existing Proclamations from the Governor, Orders from the Secretary of the State Department of Health and any applicable Orders from the Jefferson County Health Officer.

4. The Health Officer and his/her representatives are hereby authorized to inspect venues for compliance with the COVID-19 safeguards. Enforcement shall begin by providing the venue with an opportunity to remedy the violation, except that immediate suspension may be implemented when deemed necessary to correct an imminent or actual health hazard.

5. The Health Officer and his/her representatives are authorized to enforce non-compliance through the suspension of operating permits, or other remedies authorized by state law and/or the Jefferson County Code.

6. Implementation Plan.

- a. The Health Officer or his/her representative may conduct inspections of establishments pertaining to COVID-19 safeguards periodically and will respond to complaints. Upon determining that there is a violation of the COVID-19 safeguards, the Health Officer's representatives will provide education and guidance, to assist in coming into compliance, unless immediate permit suspension is necessary to respond to an imminent or actual health hazard.
- b. Where immediate permit suspension is not necessary, the Health Officer's representatives will, within 72 hours of providing education/guidance, again determine whether compliance has been achieved. If there remains non-compliance with COVID-19 safeguards, permits will be suspended, and an immediate cessation of operations will be required.
- c. If an immediate permit suspension was imposed, the establishment shall be responsible for reaching out to the Jefferson County Department of Public Health to address potential reopening.
- d. All establishments with a suspended permit will be required to submit corrective actions and meet with the Health Officer's representative to discuss such actions before they are allowed to schedule a reopening inspection.
- e. The Health Officer's representatives also may request the assistance of the local police, Washington State Patrol, Jefferson County Sheriff, and all other officers and employees of any political subdivision within Jefferson County to enforce this health order.

f. Noncompliant establishments will also be referred to the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries for additional enforcement.

7. Consequences of Noncompliance. Noncompliance with this rule may subject the violator to permit suspension by the Health Officer. Any person who shall fail or refuse to obey any lawful order issued by any local health officer shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor punishable as provided under RCW [70.05.120](#). Violations of Secretary of Health directives and the Governor's Proclamations are misdemeanors and are subject to criminal penalties. Violations of Department of Labor and Industries are subject to fines and other enforcement remedies by that department.

Ordered this 2nd day of September, 2021



Allison Berry, MD, MPH

Jefferson County Health Officer