

**Subject: New Statewide Restrictions on Social Gatherings and Businesses as COVID-19 Cases Surge**

Dear City employees,

Earlier today, Governor Jay Inslee issued [new statewide restrictions](#) on social gatherings and businesses in response to the surge of COVID-19 across Washington state. While we have one of the lowest rates of cases of any major city, we are not immune to the public health crisis surging in our nation, state, and region. People are hurting right now. Our workers and small businesses have been facing the largest economic crisis since the Great Depression.

During the first two weeks of November, Seattle had 1,550 residents diagnosed with the virus, which is nearly 20% of Seattle's total cases. The number of people in Seattle currently in the hospital with COVID-19 has increased quickly over the past week and is the highest since April 2020. Across King County, hospitalizations last week increased by over 70 percent compared to the previous four weeks.

These statewide restrictions on social gatherings and some businesses will last until December 14, 2020, and more information is available on the [Governor's website](#).

Effective November 16, all indoor social gatherings with people outside your household are prohibited. Outdoor gatherings can continue, but they're limited to five people outside of your household. The Governor's order also limits some business activity, with the biggest change being that indoor dining is now prohibited. We know that prolonged social indoor gatherings is one of the main drivers of this COVID-19 surge.

While these changes undoubtedly will impact each of our lives, they will not impact the current environment here at work. We also know that many activities – both indoor and outdoor – can be done safely, and the City of Seattle has implemented many new safety and health protocols.

All frontline personnel who have been reporting to work in-person should continue to do so, while following public health requirements like wearing a mask, physical distancing, temperature screening, and practicing good hygiene. If you haven't already, please review our workplace [face covering](#) and COVID-19 [self-assessment protocols](#). On behalf of the entire City of Seattle, I extend my most profound gratitude to our frontline personnel and first responders. Your dedication is what keeps our City going.

All employees currently teleworking should continue to do so. The work we're doing during this unprecedented time to provide essential services and help our residents and businesses who are struggling is so critical.

I know these new restrictions seem daunting, and this year's holiday season will be hard as we cannot gather with our loved ones. But celebrating at a distance is how we keep everyone safe. We are at a crucial point in the pandemic and our actions will shape our ability to return to a more normal life in the months to come. Everyone who lives and works in Seattle must mask up, avoid gatherings - especially all indoor social gatherings, and follow all public health guidance. It's up to all of us to slow the spread of COVID-19 and protect our families, friends, colleagues, and communities.

As always, thank you for everything you're doing to serve our Seattle communities during this exceptional moment in history. I remain so proud and humbled to be part of this incredible workforce.

Please stay safe and healthy.

Jenny