

SAN JUAN BASIN public health

Media Release

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Safer La Plata: San Juan Basin Public Health Issues Public Health Order to Control the Spread of COVID-19 in La Plata County ***New Order Implements Phased Approach to Re-Opening***

Durango, Colo.: San Juan Basin Public Health's (SJBPH) today announced the order "Safer La Plata," a phased approach that will delay the re-opening of some non-essential local businesses and workplaces to May 8th, because of continued increases of COVID-19 in parts of our region. The new SJBPH Order instructs businesses and workplaces to follow safety protocols and requirements to protect employees, customers and the community from the spread of COVID-19. The order is effective as of Wednesday, April 29th, 2020.

"San Juan Basin Public Health's highest priority is to protect the health and safety of the people we serve," said SJBPH's Executive Director Liane Jollon. "This order will help to protect La Plata County residents from COVID-19 as the agency continues to work aggressively with the community to mitigate the spread of the virus and to begin re-opening our economy," Jollon said.

The [SJBPH 'Safer La Plata' public health order](#) will allow additional sectors to reopen with strict precautions beginning May 8th. These businesses include personal services such as salons, tattoo parlors, dog groomers, massage, and personal training. In-store retail and non-essential offices may also open at this time with strict social distancing and other precautions. Businesses and workplaces will be required to self-certify that they understand and can carry out strict precautions in order to re-open.

"We understand that the 'Stay at Home' order was difficult economically, physically and mentally for all of us," said Director Jollon. "We all want to return to normal, and to do so successfully, we must take intermediate steps to protect our community. If restrictions are loosened too quickly, or businesses and workplaces do not have enough time to prepare, we could find ourselves with a surge in cases that would set us back," Jollon said.

On April 27th, specific businesses and services outlined in the [Governor's Safer-at-Home Executive Order](#) re-opened as curbside and delivery retail, real estate showings, and much-needed medical and dental procedures.

As Jack Llewellyn, Executive Director of the Durango Chamber of Commerce said, “the Durango Chamber of Commerce would love to see our members and businesses open, however, we have one opportunity to get this right. Opening up and returning to business **unusual** is the new normal and we all need to understand there is a reason for the opening directives and procedures. I compare this to a faucet slowly being turned on and not opening a flood gate. Be patient, Durango and we will get through this.”, Llewellyn said.

Roger Zalneraitis, Economic Development Manager at the Southern Ute Indian Tribe commented, “We appreciate San Juan Basin Public Health’s reasoned decision-making on the COVID-19 pandemic. The Southern Ute Indian Tribe announced a continuation of their own stay-at-home order last week. San Juan Basin Public Health’s announcement of a delayed reopening more closely aligns with the Tribe’s own approach to handling COVID-19, which we appreciate.”, Zalneraitis said.

Durango Mayor Dean Brookie added “the city understands the unique situation we are in and appreciates this carefully phased approach which is supported by our county, all three municipalities and our Southern Ute Indian Tribe neighbors. By implementing ‘Safer at Home’ carefully with intention, the more likely we can get more businesses and services open and start our new normal.”. Mayor Brookie said.

The decision to issue the order was based on established public health criteria to safeguard our community as ‘Stay at Home’ restrictions are loosened. These criteria are:

- A sustained decrease in new COVID-19 case reports across our region
- Testing can be performed quickly for all people who meet current criteria for testing
- Proper capacity for quarantine, isolation, and monitoring of all COVID-19 cases and their contacts in our jurisdiction
- Hospitals are safely able to treat patients
- Clear safeguards are in place for businesses to open with appropriate social distancing and infection control procedures

“While La Plata County has demonstrated a downward trend in new cases, we still see substantial increases in cases just to our south in San Juan County, New Mexico.”, said Director Jollon. “Our residents travel frequently for work and essential goods and services to New Mexico. The virus doesn’t know boundaries, so it is critical that our local businesses and workplaces are both well-informed and capable of practicing good infection control as we take small steps to re-open,” said Jollon.

It is important that the community move forward slowly in order to not undo the hard-fought progress made to [“flatten the curve”](#) and prevent our local hospitals from being overwhelmed. “As we prepare to move into the next phase of the pandemic, it will be critical that we continue supporting the most vulnerable people within our community,” stated Mike Murphy, interim CEO of Centura-Mercy Regional Medical Center. “By continuing our collective practices of social distancing and persistent hand washing, as well as resisting the temptation to participate in large gatherings, we will bring more normalcy into our lives while continuing to combat this virus.”, Murphy said.

SJBPH appreciates the efforts of all community members working hard to successfully socially distance and we look forward to continued support of SJBPH’s ‘Safer La Plata’ order.

The ‘Safer La Plata’ order will be in effect until May 8, 2020 unless extended, amended, or rescinded by San Juan Basin Public Health.

For the most up to date information on how to take precautions against the spread of COVID-19, visit SJBPH's website at: <https://sjbpublichealth.org/coronavirus/>

San Juan Basin Public Health is a local public health agency, governed by a seven-member local Board of Health, serving all residents of La Plata and Archuleta counties. For over 70 years, San Juan Basin Public Health has improved the health and environment of the Southwest Colorado community.

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