



COLORADO

Department of Public
Health & Environment

Application for Variance

Name of County: Alamosa

Name of Submitter: Jason Kelly

Alamosa County requests a variance from the following restrictions in Executive Order D 2020 044 and/or Public Health Order 20-28.

List the sections of Executive Order D 2020 044 and/or Public Health Order 20-28 that a variance is being sought for:

Section II(A); and
Section 5 of Appendix F; and
Addition of campgrounds; places of worship; and outdoor/indoor public gatherings

Summarize alternate restrictions being proposed to replace the above-referenced restrictions and indicate where in the Plan these alternate restrictions are addressed:

Alternate restrictions include allowing covered businesses to open with restrictions to protect the public. Information can be found at the following pages:

Restaurants: page 3-4; Gyms: page 4; Movie theaters: page 4-5; places of worship: page 5; Campgrounds: Page 5-6; Public gatherings: page 6

Upload your county COVID-19 Suppression Plan and documentation demonstrating approval by the county commissioners, and confirmation from all impacted local hospitals that they can serve all individuals needing their care. Provide a brief summary of each of the following elements contained in the county COVID-19 Suppression Plan and indicate where in the Plan more information can be found for each element.

1. Prevalence of COVID -19 within the county

As of this letter there have been 27 positive cases in Alamosa County (52 positive cases throughout the San Luis Valley which consist of Alamosa, Conejos, Costilla, Mineral, Rio Grande, Saguache counties). As a percentage of the population, this represents 0.002% of the population

2. Hospital Capacity

There are six beds in the negative pressure unit developed for response to COVID-19. Within the negative pressure unit, there are also 6 Medical/Surgical beds. SLVRMC increased the number of ventilators from 3 to 10 over the past two months. Please see attached for additional information.





3. Local containment measures

Alamosa County will continue to work with community partners to monitor and detect any new cases not only within Alamosa County, but within the entire San Luis Valley. A regional communication system has been in place and continues to monitor on a daily basis. Please see attached for additional information.

4. Conditions to determine the variance is not providing adequate COVID-19 protection and the triggers for tightening restrictions.

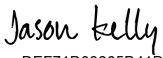
(1) Maintaining a positivity rate of less than 15%; (2) The number of active positive cases for case investigation at one time to 13 or fewer; (3) Staying below the threshold of 60% utilization of COVID-19 beds available. Please see attached for additional information.

 Confirm that the variance requested does not lessen or eliminate the protections for Vulnerable Individuals in the Safer at Home Order and PHO 20-28.

 Confirm that the county will collect and monitor data to evaluate the impacts of the variance. and make such data available upon request by CDPHE.

Additional information relevant to the requested variance
Please see attached information.

By signing below, I attest that I am authorized pursuant to the adoption of the COVID-19 Suppression Plan by the Board of County Commissioners to submit this variance request to CDPHE for consideration.

DocuSigned by:

DEF71D03265D41D

2020-05-11

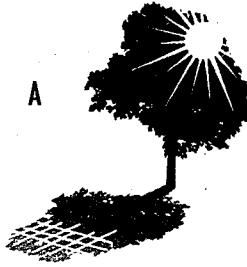
Signature

Date

For internal CDPHE use

CDPHE Executive Director

A L A M O S A C O U N T Y



May 11 2020

Jared Polis, Governor
web-portal: covid19.colorado.gov
State Capitol Building
200 E. Colfax Ave, Rm. 136
Denver, CO 80203

RE: Request for variance from PHO 20-28

Dear Governor Polis:

On behalf of Alamosa County, we want to thank your office and staff for working diligently to keep the citizens of this State safe. We recognize the importance of issuing Public Health Orders to significantly reduce the transmission rates of COVID-19 and, in general, are supportive of those efforts.

Alamosa County has also worked hard at maintain critical government functions by following the State's guidelines regarding remote workers, as well as placing protective screens so that employees can continue to engage with the public while maintaining proper safety precautions.

As you are fully aware, the COVID-19 pandemic that has swept across our state has left many individuals in dire economic situations. With the new "Safer at Home" executive order, many of those businesses will now be able to reopen to begin the recovery process. In an effort to expand on that process, Alamosa County is requesting a variance to several sections of the "Safer-at-Home" order. This includes Section II(A) and Section 5 of Appendix F. Section II(A) concerns the continued closure of places of public accommodations such as restaurants, bars, gyms, and movie theaters; Appendix F, Section 5 addresses places of worship; and the addition of campgrounds. These particular industries are a critical part of small communities such as Alamosa, and need the ability to recover as well.

In addition to the specific measures listed herein, Alamosa County will by public health order require that all places of public accommodation require all employees to wear a mask while indoors including those industries listed below.

As a basis for this request, Alamosa County submits the following information:

Office of County Commissioners 1
P.O. Box 178 • 8900-A Independence Way
Alamosa, CO 81101
commissioner@alamosacounty.org

Phone: 719-589-4848
Fax: 719-589-1900
www.alamosacounty.org

Prevalence of COVID-19 within the County:

Fortunately, due to the efforts of the Alamosa County Board of Health and numerous community partners, Alamosa County has had a very limited number of COVID-19 cases. As of this letter there have been 27 positive cases in Alamosa County (52 positive cases throughout the San Luis Valley which consist of Alamosa, Conejos, Costilla, Mineral, Rio Grande, Saguache counties). As a percentage of the population, this represents 0.002% of the population. It is important to note that the San Luis Valley consists of nearly 8,100 square miles, with an average population density of less than 8 people/square mile. (See Table A). Although testing remains at a level that we would like to see increased, the number of positive tests on any given days remains low. As a result, there have been no immediate concerns regarding hospital capacity.

TABLE A (2020 Census Data)

County	Area sq. mile	pop	pop/sq mile	cases	percent cases/pop
Alamosa	722	15000	21	27	.002
Conejos	1287	8400	6	1	.0001
Costilla	1227	3600	3	3	.0008
Mineral	875	831	1	2	.002
Rio Grande	911	12400	14	7	.007
Saguache	3168	5900	2	12	.002
Total/	8190	46131	7.8	52	.001

*Only 2 positive Alamosa cases are hospitalized at this time.

Hospital capacity:

Alamosa County is served by the San Luis Valley Regional Medical Center ("SLVRMC"). Throughout this pandemic, Alamosa County Public Health and SLVRMC have been communicating and coordinating its response. There are six beds in the negative pressure unit developed for response to COVID-19. Within the negative pressure unit, there are also 6 Medical/Surgical beds. SLVRMC increased the number of ventilators from 3 to 10 over the past two months. SLVRMC continually monitors the resources available in our referral hospitals, in the event that the need begins to approach capacity. As indicated in the supporting documentation, SLVRMC monitors daily the supply of PPE and has adequate PPE to handle the standard health care capacity as well as COVID-19 cases.

Local containment measures being proposed:

Alamosa County will continue to work with community partners to monitor and detect any new cases not only within Alamosa County, but within the entire San Luis Valley. A regional communication system has been in place and continues on a daily basis to report new cases and concerns across the region. The Alamosa COVID 19 Homeless Task Force has been engaged in the education and wellbeing of the displaced people of Alamosa County and the City of Alamosa. We are monitoring the health of these individuals for symptoms of COVID 19 while educating them of this virus. Members of this task force include a commissioner of Alamosa County, County Administrator, County Emergency Manager, Public Health Director, Public Health Nurse, City Manager, and the City Emergency Manager. We have also engaged with our local Homeless Shelter (La Puente) in an advisory role as well as, SLV Behavioral Health Group and Valley Wide Health Systems. In addition, the task force has engaged with a local hotel to shelter symptomatic patients that are displaced and under orders from a health care professional to isolate, as well as displaced patients that have tested positive and ordered to isolate.

Proposed alternative restriction:

Alamosa County is requesting a variance to Public Health Order 20-28, and shall implement the following specific restrictions which shall be enacted by a local public health order:

1. Restaurants and Bars:

a. Restaurants, food courts, cafes, coffeehouse, and other similar places of public accommodation offering food or beverage for on-premises consumption may open under the following restrictions:

- i. Employees must wear a mask or non-medical facial covering at all times while on the premises; and
- ii. Employees must use sanitizer or wash hands each time the employee serves a different table; and
- iii. Employees experiencing ANY symptom may not work; and
- iv. Condiments shall be provided only upon request, and the exterior of the container shall be sanitized after each use; and
- v. If weather permits, outdoor seating must be utilized before moving indoors; and
- vi. All customers sitting together must be of the same household; and
- vii. Capacity is limited to no more than 1 customer per 144 square feet of floor space. For purposes of this section only, a group of the same household shall be considered 1 customer. A minimum of 6 feet in all directions from each "household" group must still be maintained; and
- viii. After each use, tables and chairs shall be sanitized; and bathrooms should be disinfected and cleaned frequently; and

- ix. Self-serving buffets and other self-serving stations shall remain closed; and
- x. Signage shall be conspicuously displayed throughout the facility and at a minimum at every entry/exit point; and
- xi. Touchless payment options should be used whenever possible; and
- xii. Customers shall not wait in the lobby or in lines outside for a table; and
- xiii. Implement a reservation system to notify customers when their table is ready; and
- xiv. Customers shall wear a mask or face covering while in the building except when dining

2. Gyms:

- a. Gyms, health clubs and similar training facilities may open under the following restrictions:
 - i. Employees must wear a mask or non-medical facial covering at all times while on the premises; and
 - ii. Employees must use sanitizer or wash hands regularly; and
 - iii. Employees experiencing ANY symptom may not work; and
 - iv. The facility must be capable, or put in place a system of tracking the number of individuals at any given time; and
 - v. Capacity is limited to no more than 1 customer per 144 square feet of floor space and customers must maintain social distancing at a minimum of 6 feet from one another when using equipment; and
 - vi. Customers must wear a mask or non-medical facial covering at all times; and
 - vii. Hand sanitizer shall be made available at all entry/exit points; and
 - viii. Equipment shall be sanitized after each use by the customer; and bathrooms should be disinfected and cleaned frequently; and
 - ix. Equipment must not be shared, except by members of the same household; and
 - x. Locker rooms/pools/saunas, and shared spaces must remain closed; and
 - xi. Signage shall be conspicuously displayed throughout the facility and at a minimum at every entry/exit point and if possible, entry/exits should be one way; and
 - xii. Touchless payment options should be used whenever possible
 - xiii. On-site child care facilities shall remain closed

3. Movie Theaters:

- a. Movie theaters may open (at their discretion) under the following restrictions:
 - i. Employees must wear a mask or non-medical facial covering at all times while on the premises; and

- ii. Employees must use sanitizer or wash hands regularly; and
- iii. Employees experiencing ANY symptom may not work; and
- iv. The facility must be capable, or put in place a system of tracking the number of individuals at any given time; and
- v. Capacity is limited by the number of seats per theater with the following restrictions:
 - 1. Customers must be separated by a minimum of three seats to the side, and rows must be alternated. For purposes of this section, individuals residing in the same household shall be considered 1 customer; customers must maintain social distancing at a minimum of 6 feet from other customers when watching a movie; and
- vi. All chairs must be sanitized after each movie
- vii. Concessions lines must have adequate floor markings to indicate proper social distancing; and
- viii. Touchless payment options should be used whenever possible

4. Places of Worship

- a. Places of worship are encouraged to continue online or drive-up services as much as possible, but may under the following conditions have in-person services:
 - i. Limit the number of worshipers to no more than 1 person per 144 square feet of floor space; and
 - ii. Maintain social distancing of a minimum of 6 feet between individuals who are not of the same household; and
 - iii. Individuals are not allowed to socialize in the lobby or waiting area before or after services; and
 - iv. Prohibit anyone who is experiencing symptoms from participating in services; and
 - v. Implement one-way entry/exits and directional walkways as much as possible; and
 - vi. Implement touchless offerings and communion/sacrament options as much as possible; and
 - vii. Worshipers shall wear a non-medical mask or face covering at all times while on the premises

5. Campgrounds/RV Parks:

- a. Campgrounds and RV Parks may open under the following conditions:
 - i. All common areas of recreation must remain closed. This includes but not limited to: indoor/outdoor public gatherings; swimming pools; playgrounds; laundry rooms; and cancelling all auxiliary activities including the rental of atv/utv's and other recreational equipment.
 - ii. Only 1 camper per campsite/cabin. For purposes of this section "camper" refers to all members of the same household.
 - 1. Indoor cabins must be sanitized and disinfected between each use.

2. Total number of campsites are limited to 50% of the total number of spaces (every other site).
 3. RV's utilizing full hookups are not limited.
 - iii. Owners/Operators must provide signage regarding proper hygiene practices and provide information regarding social distancing requirements.
 - iv. Campgrounds must implement touchless payment system and implement an online reservation system and only residents of Colorado may make a reservation until June 1, 2020.
 1. Campers must certify that all members of the party are COVID-19 symptom free, and that if during their stay any develop symptoms related to COVID-19, they agree to leave the campground.
 - v. Campground restrooms shall be cleaned and sanitized frequently, and if feasible converted into family style single use facilities that are sanitized between each use; and
 - vi. Dishwashing stations must be utilized by 1 camper at a time and disinfected and sanitized after each use.
 - vii. Outside visitors are not allowed at the campground.
6. Public Gatherings:
- a. Indoor public gatherings shall be allowed in phases as set forth below:
 - i. Phase 1: gatherings of up to 10 people shall be allowed provided that social distancing of a minimum of 6 feet can be maintained at all times.
 - ii. Phase 2: Provided that there is a continued decrease in the number of COVID-19 cases for a period of at least two weeks from the date of approval of the variance request, gatherings of up to 50 people shall be allowed provided that social distancing of a minimum of 6 feet can be maintained at all times.
 - iii. Phase 3: Provided that there is a continued decrease in the number of COVID-19 cases for a period of at least six (6) weeks from the date of approval of the variance request, large venue gatherings shall be allowed. Social distancing shall be maintained to the extent possible.
 - b. Outdoor public gatherings shall be allowed in phases set forth below
 - i. Gatherings must not include spectators and are limited only to participants in the event.
 - ii. Participants must maintain social distancing when not participating, and when possible maintain social distancing at all times.
 - iii. If feasible masks or face coverings must be worn at all time
 - iv. The event must be coordinated in such a way as to not allow any more than 10 participants at any given time.
 - v. A system must be in place which allows the event organizer to contact participants electronically regarding their scheduled event.

COVID-19 SUPPRESSION PLAN

Prevalence of COVID-19 within the county

Alamosa County's first positive case of COVID-19 was reported on March 26th, and to-date, we have had twenty seven positive cases, one probable case, and two deaths. Six cases have completed isolation to date. The number of daily positive COVID-19 cases has remained around three per week since April 1st until May 3rd, when 11 new positive cases were identified at a single location. Alamosa's COVID-19 fatality rate is 7%, and the mortality rate stands at 0.01%. Positivity rate is 23.3%.

Hospital Capacity

The San Luis Valley, through SLV Regional Medical Center in Alamosa and Conejos County Hospital in La Jara, has access to a total of 12 adult critical care ventilators, 6 ICU beds, and 7 negative-pressure beds. Rio Grande Hospital has zero ICU beds, but does have access to three adult critical care ventilators. Potential COVID 19 patients are seen and initially treated in the SLV Health emergency room to include intubation if needed.

COVID 19 testing is currently taking place at SLV Health (SLV Regional Medical Center, Conejos County Hospital and the respiratory clinic), Valley Wide Health Systems' Convenient Care Clinic, and at Rio Grande Hospital. None of the three hospitals are able to perform antigen or antibody testing due to current inability to acquire or purchase reagents and/or testing equipment. All testing must be sent outside of the San Luis Valley to other reference labs. Turnaround time for test results has gone from 5-7 days initially to 24-48 hours.

Supply chains for Personal Protective Equipment are currently still not fully open, but are improving. The San Luis Valley has a regional Public Health DOC (Department Operations Center) stood up. The DOC Logistics section has a standardized process to accept 213RR requests for supplies to be filled regionally, and to be requested to the State Emergency Operations Center through WebEOC.

Local containment measures

Alamosa County Public Health Investigation Capacity

Alamosa County has three public health nurses who are currently able to do limited contact investigations on positive cases; two nurses are at full-time status; one is working at 1/2FTE. Due to the current volume of case and contact investigations, Alamosa County Public Health Department is using the services of our receptionist to assist with case and contact follow-up.

Our county hosts and works closely with the SLV Regional Emergency and Preparedness team, including the SLV Regional Epidemiologist. We also host the two-person SLV Regional Environmental Health team. We coordinate closely with CDPHE's communicable disease staff, Environmental Health and Sustainability staff, and we work closely with other SLV public health management and staff to inform, coordinate and support our local response.

Case investigations are initiated within 48 hours, and contact tracing is performed with those identified as having had direct contact with identified positive cases. We are currently enlisting the support of neighboring public health agencies to assist with these activities.

Outbreak Risks in High-Vulnerability Settings are Minimized

The Public Health Department is currently investigating a COVID-19 outbreak at a wholesale food production facility operating with a reduced workforce of 100 employees. We are currently enlisting the support of neighboring public health agencies and healthcare partners to assist with testing and other disease control response activities.

Alamosa County Public Health Department nurses maintain contact with the nurses at the Alamosa County jail. We have a public health nurse assigned to provide CDPHE and CDC policies and guidance to county-based long term care facilities.

The two SLV Environmental Health staff work to implement state orders, field complaints, and provide resources and guidance. The Environmental Health team works closely with child care facilities across the San Luis Valley, and provides guidance as it is updated. The team maintains contact with retail food establishments in five of six SLV counties; they are working to establish a virtual inspection protocol for those facilities, and provide guidance to retailers as it is updated. They have been providing guidance and reviews of response plans to some wholesale food operations in the region. They engage in similar contacts and updates with hotels, RV campgrounds, pools and hot springs and other facilities affected by COVID 19. Contact with and inspection of schools is currently suspended during the current closure.

Workplace Preventive Measures are Established

Alamosa County is currently utilizing the state's "Safer at Home" guidance for business reopening. If Alamosa County's variance is approved, public health will update guidance for the specific areas of the variance requested.

Alamosa County Public Health Department will partner closely with our Regional Environmental Health Program staff to best ensure consistent messaging across retail food establishments, as well as to align with state guidance as it is updated. The team will also need to partner closely with the other four county public health agencies (Rio Grande, Conejos, Costilla, and Saguache) in their service area to ensure that retailers in those communities are aware of the public health orders and variances affecting their operations.

Communities are Engaged

Alamosa County Public Health Department has been an active partner in the SLV Public Health Department Operations Center (DOC) (and the regional Emergency Coordination Group, when it was active). Regional operations largely support public health messaging through regional PIO and JIC, supply procurement and distribution through regional Logistics, and regional situational awareness. Alamosa County Public Health Department has reassigned the Deputy Director to local PIO duties, and he coordinates closely with the regional JIC.

Every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, Alamosa County Public Health Department provides updates through an identified public health liaison to the SLV COVID 19 Response Conference Call. Attendees include SLV county emergency managers, regional DHSEM field representative, CDOT, SLV Small Business Development Center, Xcel Energy, SLV Rural Electric Cooperative, SLV Behavioral Health Group, Colorado State Patrol, CSP Dispatch, and other partners.

Alamosa County Public Health Department is an active partner in the SLV Healthcare Coalition. The Coalition has been meeting weekly through the COVID 19 response, and a Testing Taskforce has been stood up to address regional COVID 19 testing needs.

The Alamosa County Incident Command team meets twice daily, Monday through Friday, identifying objectives, reporting progress and other updates for situational awareness. Alamosa County Public Health Department meets daily during the week with the other SLV public health agencies to support each other's work and align efforts.

Alamosa County Public Health Department staff have been providing state and CDC guidance to affected businesses and community members, proactively and as requested, or in response to complaints of noncompliance from the public.

Active Surveillance to determine adequacy of COVID-19 disease control and triggers for tightening restrictions

As Alamosa County is an integral part of the entire San Luis Valley, it will continue to monitor for the presence of COVID 19 across the region. The determination of whether the proposed physical distancing policies are working will be based on:

- 1) Maintaining a positivity rate of less than 15%;
- 2) The number of active positive cases for case investigation at one time to 13 or fewer; and
- 3) Staying below the threshold of 60% utilization of COVID-19 beds available in the San Luis Valley (5 of the 8 COVID beds at SLVRMC).

We will continue to monitor the volume of calls into the nurse call lines at SLV Health, Rio Grande Hospital, and Valley Wide Health Systems. We will monitor the presentation

of COVID-like illness (ILI) to local and regional primary care, urgent care, and emergency room setting in the region. This information will also be utilized to guide decisions moving forward.

If respective numbers for any of these measures exceeds the stated limit, actions will be taken to increase physical distancing practices, and Alamosa County will immediately suspend the “variance” provisions requested herein.

Respectfully submitted by the Alamosa County Board of Commissioners,

/s/ Michael Yohn
Michael Yohn,
Chair

/s/ Helen Sigmond
Helen Sigmond
Vice-Chair

/s/ Darius Allen
Darius Allen
Commissioner

/s/ Carmelo Hernandez
Carmelo Hernandez
Chief Medical Officer
SLV Regional Medical Center

Della Cox-Vieira
Della Cox-Vieira
Public Health Director
Alamosa County