

## **COVID-19 UPDATE 5/7/20**

### **GRR FIRE DEPARTMENT**

Aggressive action and the inherent social distances of Montana have reduced the frequency of new cases and have kept the healthcare system from flooding. The GRRFD remains prepared and has trained in the management of COVID-19 cases.

Visit the Montana Governor's Coronavirus Task Force website for current information on Statewide declarations and other information about the effort to deal with COVID-19 in Montana: <https://covid19.mt.gov>.

The simplest way to understand where we, as a community and a nation stand, consider this: We are in at the 11<sup>th</sup> tee in the first round of a four-round golf tournament. Or, if this works better for you: we're at minute 9 of the first quarter of a football game, and we're down 3-14. We have a long slog ahead and need to move with care and caution.

#### **Montana Phase One:**

1. Vulnerable Individuals: **people over 65 years of age and/or those with serious underlying health conditions, including high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma, and those whose immune system is compromised such as by chemotherapy for cancer and other conditions requiring such therapy.**
2. All individuals (non-household), WHEN IN PUBLIC (e.g., parks, outdoor recreation areas, shopping areas), should maximize physical distance from others.
3. Avoid GATHERING in groups of more than 10 people in circumstances that do not readily allow for appropriate physical distancing.
4. MINIMIZE NON-ESSENTIAL TRAVEL and adhere to Montana guidelines regarding quarantine.
5. As of 4/27/20:
  - a. MAIN STREET AND RETAIL BUSINESSES can become operational on or after April 27, 2020 with reduced capacity and where strict physical distancing protocols can be maintained.
  - b. OUTDOOR RECREATION can become operational if sites adhere to strict physical distancing between groups and exercise frequent sanitation protocols if public facilities are open.
  - c. PLACES OF WORSHIP can become operational on or after April 26, 2020 with reduced capacity and where strict physical distancing protocols can be maintained between non-household members. Avoid GATHERING in groups of more than 10 people in circumstances that do not readily allow for appropriate physical distancing.
6. As of 5/4/20:
  - a. RESTAURANTS / BARS / BREWERIES / DISTILLERIES / CASINOS can become operational on or after May 4, 2020 under strict physical distancing and reduced capacity protocols in accordance with State guidelines.
  - b. All patrons must be out of bars, restaurants, and casinos by 11:30.
7. GYMS / POOLS / HOT TUBS remain closed.

8. Other PLACE OF ASSEMBLY shall remain closed (e.g., movie and performance theaters, concert halls, bowling alleys, bingo halls, and music halls).
9. Beginning May 7, 2020 all schools have the option to return to in-classroom teaching delivery.

## **What does GRR Fire Recommend?**

### **Continue social distancing.**

This is probably the one most effective thing we as a nation can do. It is the thing that is most likely to keep you healthy during the COVID-19 pandemic, and also applies to every influenza season.

1. Practice good hand hygiene:
  - a. Vigorous hand washing for at least 20 seconds with soap and water after contact with surfaces you don't control, such as at stores or other public places.
    - i. Wash them immediately when you get home after going to stores or other public places.
  - b. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers.
    - i. Use them before entering and after exiting stores or other public buildings.
  - c. Consider wearing disposable gloves when shopping.
  - d. Wear disposable gloves when filling up at the gas station.
2. Avoid touching your face.
3. Use disinfectant wipes or sprays on commonly touched surfaces, such as automobile controls, handles, doorknobs, and other frequently touched surfaces.
4. Avoid unnecessary or frequent shopping.
5. Keep at least 6 feet away from others except at-home family members.
6. Wear a cloth face mask when you go to any circumstance that makes social distancing difficult.
7. **Stay at home if you feel sick.**
  - a. If you have symptoms of COVID-19 contact your health provider by email or phone. If you don't have a healthcare provider, contact the Gallatin City County Public Health Department.
  - b. Do not leave home until cleared by your healthcare provider.
  - c. If you live with others, see the section about taking care of COVID-19 patients at home.

### **Neighborhood Support Teams (NSTs):**

These teams are available to help home-bound GRRHOA residents in case they need to quarantine at home. If you live on GRR and have not been contacted by an NST coordinator, email [admin@grrfd.org](mailto:admin@grrfd.org).

### **Complete a My Medical History document:**

See the My Medical History section of this website for details.

**Can I get vaccinated?**

There is currently no vaccine available for COVID-19. Adults over 65 years old should also receive pneumococcal vaccines. These reduce the risk of death from the most common form of bacterial pneumonia, one of the complications of COVID-19 and influenza. Routine childhood vaccinations should be administered on schedule. Parents of children are urged to update any past-due vaccinations.

**Should I demand my doctor prescribe me preventive medications?**

There are no medications, treatments, or vitamin combinations that are proven to prevent COVID-19, despite passionate (and mostly fraudulent) internet-based claims to the contrary. A number of medications are undergoing clinical trials to assess their possible benefits, but none have proven effective in preventing COVID-19. To review the latest CDC recommendations, see: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/therapeutic-options.html>.

**What will GRR Fire do in the event of an emergency in someone with COVID-19?**

GRR Fire will respond to 911 calls on GRR. The EMTs in GRRFD will assume every patient has COVID-19, whether they know it or not. This includes calls for problems that are not COVID-related. In all calls, we send in one “scout” EMT to assess the situation and determine the risk of COVID-19, place a mask on the patient, and determine what resources are needed to care for the patient. GRR Fire will care for the patient in their home until a transporting ambulance arrives. Like every volunteer fire department, GRRFD does not pay its volunteers and cannot guarantee that an EMT is always available. If one is not available, we will ask Manhattan VFD to provide mutual aid.

**Which COVID-19 patients need hospital transport by ambulance?**

Ambulances will only transport COVID-19 patients with moderate to severe respiratory distress, those requiring oxygen, significant other diseases, new confusion or are difficult to arouse, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, and those in shock. Ambulances will not transport patients with none of the above, per Gallatin County protocol.

**What if you are sick but do not need ambulance transport to the hospital?**

Contact your medical provider or the Gallatin City County Health Department (406-582-3100) for further instructions. Around 80% of COVID-19 patients do not need to see a medical provider or go to the hospital. They are best cared for in their own home. If they become sicker, they should call their medical provider or the health department for instructions. If they do not require an ambulance, they should drive themselves (if well enough to do so), or be driven by an already exposed household member, to BDH if directed to do so by their medical provider or the health department. Of course, if you deem the illness to be severe enough to call 911, do so.

**What if you have an illness other than COVID-19 or an injury that requires ambulance transport to the hospital?**

There is no change in ambulance transport protocols or services for patients who call 911 and need ambulance transport to the hospital emergency department for assessment and possible hospital admission.

### **How do I get tested for COVID-19?**

Local testing is still limited to those with symptoms. Symptoms of COVID-19 include:

1. Fever (more than 100 degrees F).
2. Cough.
3. Shortness of breath.
4. Loss of smell or taste.
5. Chest pain with the above.
6. New onset muscle aches and pains.
7. Headache.
8. New onset fatigue.
9. Confusion.
10. Some people have diarrhea, nausea, vomiting.

Testing indications and protocols are changing too rapidly to describe here. At this time, contact your medical provider's office or the Public Health Department by phone or electronic means for instructions. Drive-through testing systems have been implemented by Bozeman Health but require a physician order for testing. At the time of this writing, the main indications for testing are exposure or symptoms. Mass screening without a physician's order is done in other places and may take place here.

Antibody testing is not readily available or reliable. Many tests are on the 'market' but few are accurate. These tests are not appropriate for diagnosis of an active case. The presence of antibodies can identify a person who has previously been infected by COVID-19. However, they don't prove that person is safe from getting COVID-19 again.