

**From:** [Mayor](#)  
**To:** [Mayor](#)  
**Subject:** COVID-19 Update: Spokane pursues earlier opening plus info on fraud  
**Date:** Tuesday, May 12, 2020 5:18:58 PM

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A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Nadine Woodward".

## The City of Spokane

# COVID-19 News Update for May 12

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*Information about Coronavirus Disease 19 (COVID-19) is evolving rapidly. We want to make sure our City employees have up-to-date information. We will provide this update, as needed, to communicate what you need to know, while we work to reduce the spread of this disease in our community and continue to provide critical public services.*

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### **Spokane County Pursues Opening at a Different Pace**

Following actions by the Spokane County Commission and the Spokane County Board of Health, Spokane County will seek a variance that would allow our county to open on a different pace than the rest of the state. The variance request asks the Governor to approve a move to the second phase of the State's Safe Start Plan immediately.

Phase 2 includes opening retail stores for in-person sales, restaurant with limited capacity seating, new construction, hair stylists and barber shops, house cleaners, and additional manufacturing. Those businesses build on those allowed in phase 1, including landscapers, car sales, and curbside sales at retail locations. In all cases, the plan doesn't allow business-as-usual, but requires multiple safety measures designed to continue to reduce the spread of the coronavirus.

The Board of Health took its action last night, unanimously approving a [resolution](#) to request the variance after [Spokane County Health Officer Bob Lutz wrote a letter](#) that recommends the Governor consider that request based on a variety of health criteria. Spokane City Council President Breean Beggs, Council Member Betsy Wilkerson, and Council Member Karen Stratton are members of the Board of Health and voted in favor of the resolution.

This morning, the [Board of County Commissioners](#) also unanimously approved a [letter](#) supporting the variance, which must be officially submitted to the Washington State Department of Health. The submittal package also includes confirmation from local hospitals certifying their bed capacity for COVID-19 patient and PPE supplies. With these actions, the variance request will move on for consideration by the state.

### **Mayor Woodward Supports Variance Plan**

Mayor Nadine Woodward also has supported the plan to reopen Spokane's economy at a somewhat different pace than the rest of the state. The Mayor—and other community leaders—has pointed to low case counts, available capacity at Spokane's hospitals, and ramping up of a system to provide "contact tracing" around people who test positive, among others things, to demonstrate that Spokane is positioned well to move onto the next phase.

The Mayor says she remains hopeful that the Governor will support Spokane's request for a variance. The request is based on the metrics that the governor has focused on to make decisions for our state.

The Mayor stresses that for reopening to succeed, our citizens and employees have to do their part. Basic hygiene measures, including hand washing, covering coughs and sneezes, and staying home when sick, will be critical.

Also, maintaining appropriate distance between people is critical. Keeping space between you and others is one of the best tools we have to avoid being exposed to this virus and slowing its spread in Spokane—and really across the state and beyond. You know the information: Stay at least 6 feet from other people, don't gather in groups, and avoid crowded locations.

### **Unemployment Claim Fraud Affecting Our Employees**

A number of our employees have become victims of fraud in recent weeks, with criminal using their names, social security number, and related information to file fraudulent claims for unemployment. The City is not alone; other government agencies and businesses are reporting similar incidents of fraud. With the suspension of the one-week waiting period to gain unemployment benefits, the state Employment Security Department is processing claims quickly without the usual time to provide more verification, which may be part of the problem.

Human Resources has been able to identify the fraudulent claims and inform employees of the how to challenge the claim and then proceed with steps to protect their personal information from continued misuse. HR has put together [this information sheet detailing those steps](#). Please be on the lookout for any evidence of fraud as you review your personal information.

### **More Information to Assist Our Employees**

*Here are some more resources from our Employee Assistance Program:*

- [Five signs your teenager is battling depression](#)  
It's no secret that teenagers can be moody, but research shows that ongoing moodiness often is far more serious.
- [Treating COVID-19 at home: Care tips for you and others](#)  
If you have coronavirus disease 19 and you are caring for yourself at home or caring for a loved one, you might have questions. How do you know when emergency care is needed? How long is isolation necessary? What can you do to prevent the spread of germs?

To access more topics related to COVID-19 visit: [EAPHelpLink.com](#), using company code: **CITSP0**

### **Employee Information Portal** ([covid19.spokanecity.org/](https://covid19.spokanecity.org/))

Remember, this Employee Information Portal is a great resource for employees to stay current on what's happening with the COVID-19 response. The [Employee Information Portal](#) can be accessed from work or home, using a computer or mobile device. All of the emailed information we have sent to employees is archived here.