

From: [Mayor](#)
To: [Mayor](#)
Subject: COVID-19 Update: Change Keeps Coming
Date: Monday, November 16, 2020 5:39:08 PM



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

The City of Spokane

COVID-19 News Update for Nov. 16

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.

A Message from Mayor Woodward

As difficult as this news is for everyone, yesterday's announcement with updated COVID-19 guidance is about renewed resilience. People are hurting and need to be lifted up and supported to the best of our individual and collective abilities.

The virus has put many at extreme risk of severe health impacts, significant financial hardship, or both. Stepping back is not something anyone wants. Please keep your loved ones, friends, neighbors, co-workers, acquaintances, and those you have not yet met as your top priorities.

That means wearing a mask, limiting your trips to only necessary outings, and supporting your local businesses through their struggles by using online and takeout options. The timing, right before the holidays, is particularly devastating. Referenced state financial support for local communities needs to come as quickly and decisively as the state interventions enacted over the weekend.

I want to thank our employees for their continued dedication to the City and its citizens—but also for their dedication to each other.

We will continue working together to find safe ways to move all areas of our lives safely and responsibly past this virus. We are all in this together, and it will take our collective efforts. The holidays are a time for giving and putting others first. The Spokane community—and our City team—has been doing that for months and will rally again in a time of even greater need.

New Statewide Restrictions

Washington Governor Jay Inslee announced new restrictions on Sunday, Nov. 15, to address the rapid spread of COVID-19 in Washington and across the country. The average cases in the state doubled in the two weeks preceding the announcement. See the state's [risk assessment dashboard](#).

The restrictions are statewide and take effect on Monday, Nov. 16, and will remain in effect until Monday, Dec. 14. The modified restrictions on restaurants begin on Wednesday, Nov. 18, at 11:59 p.m.

Here are some of the highlights:

- Indoor social gatherings are prohibited with people outside household units unless people quarantine for 14 days or for 7 days and get a negative test for COVID.
- Indoor service at bars and restaurants is prohibited. Curbside and takeout is ok.
- Retail locations, including grocery stores, are limited to 25% capacity.
- Religious services are limited to 25% capacity or 200 people, whichever is lower.
- Gyms and fitness facilities are closed for indoor operations.

- K-12 schools, higher education, child care, and courts are exempt from the new restrictions.

Find more information on the [Governor's web site](#).

What the New Restrictions Mean for City Employees

The restrictions also will impact us at work at the City.

- Employees who have the ability to telework and have been doing so will be asked to continue the practice, provided the employee can establish a good home work environment that is safe and healthful. All staff who have moved back into the workplace should reevaluate with their supervisor the need to be physically present in the office.
- Employees who may suffer detrimental impacts by being mandated to telework (ex: reduced hours due to partial ability to telework) will be allowed to work in City facilities, as needed, provided they abide by all implemented safety protocols (mask-wearing, social distancing, regular sanitization of work spaces and equipment) and have collaborated with their leadership on a schedule that best mitigates virus transmission risk and aligns with the relevant agreements and City policies.
- Meetings should be conducted virtually using IT-approved meeting tools wherever possible. Meetings with co-workers that must be held in-person must comply with 25% occupancy requirements.
- All city gym/fitness facilities will be closed until further notice.

Purchasing has PPE, hand sanitizer, and cleaning supplies available for departments. Please contact Thea Prince to acquire supplies.

COVID in the Workplace

City employees have done a good job keeping COVID cases down. Most employees who have reported testing positive for COVID have gotten it outside of the workplace and haven't spread it to their co-workers. As a reminder, mask wearing in all City facilities and job sites is mandatory, except when working alone or when the job involves no in-person interaction.

Remember, we have policies in place to help our employees during this time:

- Access to tele-health services: [Providence](#) & [Kaiser Permanente](#).
- No co-pays for COVID testing and treatment through year's end. City employees have their cost shares for COVID-19 testing and treatment waived from Jan. 1, 2020, through Dec. 31, 2020, under both health plans.
- Access to [emergency paid sick leave](#) if you or a close contact tests positive for COVID.
- Access to the **Employee Assistance Program** to help with stress and other mental health concerns during this unprecedented time. Access Employee Assistance Program (EAP) materials at [EAPHelpLink](#) code: **CITSP0**. Employees also can call for assistance at 1-800-999-1077.
- Access to flexible work schedules to accommodate family needs. Talk to your supervisor or HR.

Finally, here are the updated [FAQs on COVID in the workplace](#).

United Way Campaign Continues

2020 United Way Giving Campaign

Thank you to those who have participated so far in the United Way Giving Campaign! This is the last week to [learn more about how your gift with United Way creates solutions](#) to our community's current issues and support their mission.

To make a donation, visit our City campaign website at <https://www.unitedwayspokane.org/city-spokane>.

If you would like to talk directly to a representative from Spokane County United Way about their

involvement and how your donation is used in our community, they will be hosting an **Open Q & A session on Wednesday, November 18th at 1:00 pm**. Join the Zoom Meeting by following the link: <https://zoom.us/j/93273567861>.

Bell Ringing for the Salvation Army

City of Spokane employees will be supporting [Salvation Army Bell Ringing](#). The City will be staffing the red kettle outside the Carhartt store, 530 W. Main, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Half-hour volunteer slots are available for groups of two or three employees. Sign up here and help our community: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/70a0549a5ac2ca1fb6-bell>

More Information to Assist Our Employees

Here are some more resources from our Employee Assistance Program:

- [COVID-19: Helping an Older Relative Stay Connected](#)
Most people are aware of the particular risk COVID-19 presents to older adults. Since the pandemic began, roughly 80 percent of the virus's deaths have been among people age 65 and older. And the mortality rate has been highest among people age 85 and older. Less attention has been given to the physical and mental health effects of social isolation, which can also be serious—even deadly—for older people.

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

Employee Information Portal (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.