



**Lewis County Public Health & Social Services**

# **News Release**

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## **Lewis County Phase 3 Application Approved**

Chehalis, WA – Washington State Secretary of Health John Wiesman has approved Lewis County’s application to fully implement Safe Start Phase 3. In his letter to Lewis County Public Health & Social Services (LCPHSS) Director J.P. Anderson, Wiesman wrote, “I have found your application to be complete and your public health, health care, and community resources to be appropriate for consideration.”

The Phase 3 approval is effective immediately, with the following conditions noted:

- An individual Phase III business sector may reopen only **AFTER** the state publishes its guidelines for the specific sector, or generic phase guidance which applies to all businesses opening in Phase III. An individual business is only allowed to reopen after it can implement those guidelines. The guidelines can be accessed at <https://www.governor.wa.gov/issues/issues/covid-19-resources/covid-19-reopening-guidance-businesses-and-workers>
- LCPHSS must notify and consult with the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) for any COVID-19 outbreak or evidence of community transmission within Lewis County.

Guidelines on permitted activities in Phase 3 and each of the four Safe Start phases can be found in the sidebar accompanying this article.

Wiesman’s letter states no decisions have been made yet on a timeline for a county moving to Phase 4.

LCPHSS Director J.P. Anderson expressed appreciation for the state’s thorough, fact-based review of Lewis County’s application. “We went many days with no new cases, then since we submitted our application last week, we got 10 new cases. To still get the approval tells us that the state believes Lewis County is up to the task of containing new outbreaks. I believe we are. It will take us all working together,” Anderson said.

County Manager Erik Martin said, “We are excited to enter Phase 3 and I believe Lewis County is ready. Phase 3 means that we can now open government buildings to the public once again. The Board of County Commissioners has made the decision to open County buildings on Monday June 22, returning to normal business hours on that day. County staff have been working very hard over the last several weeks to ensure that the public’s return to the buildings is a safe one. We ask that you pay attention to signage as you enter the buildings guiding you to observe social distancing and sanitation measures. We do also ask that, for the protection of our employees, you please wear a mask or other

facial covering inside of our buildings if you are medically able, although it is not a requirement. We can't wait to see you all again and look forward to serving you in person.”

County officials recognize that the spike in new cases is evidence that there is still much work to be done to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in Lewis County. Wiesman's letter notes that if new cases continue to appear, the state has the authority to revoke the Phase 3 status and drop Lewis County back to Phase 2 or even Phase 1. This could slow, or even reverse health and economic recovery countywide.

Lewis County Health Officer Dr. Rachel Wood is pleased with the Phase 3 approval, but said this jump in cases shows it is never been more important to use all the tools in our toolbox to prevent coronavirus spread in the community. “We need every person living in Lewis County to do everything in their power to limit the spread,” she said.

People can stay informed by following the Lewis County COVID-19 web page at [covid19.lewiscountywa.gov](https://covid19.lewiscountywa.gov), @LCPHSS on Twitter, or [www.facebook.com/lcphss](https://www.facebook.com/lcphss).

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Sidebar

## **Permitted Phase 3 Activities**

Washington State Secretary of Health John Wiesman's Phase 3 approval letter included the following list of permitted activities and business services.

- Recreation: Outdoor group recreational sports activities of 50 or fewer people; recreational facilities at <50% capacity (gyms, public pools, etc.), and professional sports without audience participation (horseracing, baseball, etc.)
- Gatherings: Allow gatherings with no more than 50 people
- Travel: Resume non-essential travel
- Businesses/employers:
  - Restaurants/taverns <75% capacity and table size no larger than 10
  - Bar areas in restaurants/taverns at <25% capacity
  - Movie theaters at <50% capacity
  - Customer-facing government services (telework remains strongly encouraged) ○ Libraries
  - Museums
  - All other business activities not yet listed except for nightclubs and events with greater than 50 people

People in high-risk populations are strongly encouraged to limit their participation in these Phase III activities and business services. High-risk populations are currently defined by the CDC as:

- Persons 65 years of age and older;
- People of all ages with underlying medical conditions (particularly not well controlled), including:
  - People with chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma, ○ People who have serious heart conditions,
  - People who are immunocompromised,
  - People with severe obesity,
  - People with diabetes,
  - People with chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis, and
  - People with liver disease; and

- People who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility.
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