

Public Health Madison & Dane County: New order issued as COVID-19 cases decline in Dane County

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Public Health Madison & Dane County has issued [Emergency Order #11](#). The order goes into effect December 16, at 12:01am and will be in effect for 28 days.

The order mirrors much of Order #9 and allows indoor gatherings of up to 10 people, with physical distancing and face coverings, and allows outdoor gatherings of up to 25 people, with physical distancing.

“The number of people being diagnosed with COVID-19 in the recent weeks has fallen significantly, and for that we are thankful, but our burden of illness is still very high and hospitalizations are high. We ask that everyone continue to limit gathering with others for the health and safety of the community,” said Janel Heinrich, Director of Public Health Madison & Dane County.

When Order #10 was issued on November 17, the seven-day case average was 487, and 158 people were hospitalized with COVID-19. Today the seven-day case average is 171 and there are 135 people hospitalized with COVID-19. Since November 1, 54 Dane County residents have died of COVID-19.

“It has been 315 days since the first case in Dane County. We said from day one that our response would follow the data, and we are doing that today. We hope the decline in new cases will soon be mirrored in a decline in hospitalizations, but we will remain vigilant and watch these developments closely,” said Satya Rhodes-Conway, City of Madison Mayor.

The current order will continue to prevent disease spread in our community and Public Health asks that everyone continue to take precautions like masking and maintaining six feet of distance from others.

Although small gatherings are allowed, it is still safest to only gather with household members, as gatherings remain a driver of spread. Over a quarter of all people diagnosed with COVID-19 report attending a gathering in the two weeks prior to their diagnosis. If you do gather, wear a mask, keep it brief, keep it distanced, and stay outdoors if possible.

“A very strict order was warranted in November given the steep increase in cases. Relaxing the order does not mean we have won the battle, but we are headed in the right direction. We must all understand that our actions have a direct correlation to the cases, hospitalizations, and deaths, and as a result, dictate the health and safety of our community, and subsequent orders,” said Joe Parisi, Dane County Executive.

The previous order was in place for 28 days and subsequent orders will continue to be issued in 28 day increments to include two incubation periods of COVID-19 illness and respond to the latest local data.

“We appreciate that Public Health Madison & Dane County uses local data to guide community requirements. We support the nuanced and data-driven public health orders issued by Public Health, and the leadership they continue to show during this pandemic. Though our data are improving, we are not out of the woods yet. We continue to ask everyone in Dane County to take every precaution to keep themselves, their friends, neighbors and loved ones well,” said Jerry Halverson, MD, Chair of the Board of Health.

A summary of provisions in [Order #11](#) include:

- Allows indoor gatherings of up to 10 people (not including employees), with physical distancing and face coverings.
- Allows outdoor gatherings of up to 25 people (not including employees), with physical distancing.
- Businesses continue to be limited to 50% of approved building capacity and must have written [cleaning and hygiene policies](#) in place.
- At restaurants, indoor dine-in capacity is still limited to 25% of approved seating capacity levels, with physical distancing between parties. Individual

tables must all be from the same household or living unit but are no longer limited to 6 or fewer people. There are no other changes.

- Indoor seating at taverns continues to not be allowed; customers may enter taverns only to order, pick-up, and pay for food or beverage.

See the full [order](#) for all details or see this [blog post](#) summary.