



Media Information:

For immediate release:
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Yellowstone County exceeds 5,000 COVID-19 cases

Billings, MT – In the first 18 days of October, Yellowstone County reported 1,809 new cases of COVID-19. That number has nearly overwhelmed our local public health system. On Monday morning, more than 300 new cases had yet to be assigned to RiverStone Health case investigators and contact tracers. That backlog has been growing in the past few weeks, resulting in delays.

Eighty-one Yellowstone County residents have died of COVID-19, including four whose deaths were reported today, and 5,246 county residents have been infected.

The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services reports that Billings hospitals were more than 90% full over the weekend. Together, Billings Clinic and St. Vincent Healthcare hit new daily records for the number of COVID-19 patients hospitalized.

The average daily rate of new infections per 100,000 population exceeded 67 last week in Yellowstone County. That was an increase from an average of 61 new cases per day the previous week and 36 new cases a week earlier. The average number of new cases per day per 100,000 population was 18 for the first full week of September. The case rate has quadrupled since July.

A Yellowstone County Health Officer Order in effect through November 9 was issued to alert residents of the urgent need to lower the rate of new COVID-19 cases. The order caps the size of group gatherings at 25 people, encourages people to reduce their in-person interactions with people they don't live with to no more than six people a week and to work from home if possible.

To reduce the infection rate, everyone should consistently:

- Keep their distance from people outside their household. Stay a minimum of six feet away from others.
- Wear a mask in public.
- Wash their hands frequently.
- Stay home when they are ill.

RiverStone Health offers free drive-through testing for COVID-19 weekday mornings from 8:30 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. at 2173 Overland Drive. Last week, 880 tests were administered.

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