



News release:

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No further COVID-19 restrictions planned this week

BILLINGS, MT – The rate of new COVID-19 infections in Yellowstone County remained high last week, but not quite as bad as the previous week.

“Because we saw some improvement last week, in both test positivity and new case rate, we are not enacting any additional restrictions,” Yellowstone County Health Officer John Felton said Wednesday. “The situation is still very serious and if things go backwards, we might have to do so in the future.”

At his November 9 press conference, Felton said new data on local cases could necessitate a new Health Officer Order later this week. Other Montana county public health authorities have enacted new restrictions in recent days.

A delay in last week’s COVID-19 testing results from the Montana Public Health Laboratory prompted Felton and the Unified Health Command Medical-Technical Team, comprised of local public health and infectious disease experts, to wait for additional information before recommending next steps in the county’s mitigation efforts.

The Medical-Technical Team, which includes representatives of RiverStone Health, Billings Clinic and St. Vincent Healthcare, reviewed the data Tuesday. The team decided to wait one more week to look at new data again before recommending any more mitigation strategies.

Statistics compiled by RiverStone Health show that the number of new COVID-19 cases reported last week in Yellowstone County decreased slightly for all age groups under 60. The average daily new case count was 79 per 100,000 population last week, compared with 92 for the previous week. Any rate above 25 is considered a dangerous level of community infection.

The number of patients hospitalized in Yellowstone County remains at the highest levels since the beginning of the pandemic. For the first 10 days of November, an average of 124 people a day were hospitalized in the two acute care hospitals in Yellowstone County. Further, an average of 30 people were in an intensive care unit and 22 of them were on ventilators during the first ten days of the month.

Felton said all Yellowstone County residents need to carefully follow basic virus prevention measures: Keep your distance from others, wash or sanitize your hands thoroughly and often, wear a cloth face covering in public and at work when around others, work from home when possible, and stay home when you are sick.

For more Yellowstone County COVID-19 statistics and information on measures to slow the virus spread, please go online to **covid.riverstonehealth.org**.

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