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For immediate release

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Panhandle moves to yellow on the risk dial, no active hospitalizations and lowest positivity rate in months, residents encouraged to keep up the important prevention practices

Panhandle Unified Command announced on today’s briefing the risk dial has moved to yellow, moderate risk of COVID spread. The Panhandle hasn’t seen this risk level since last fall.

Important and optimistic factors that are shifting this risk level are no active hospitalizations and the lowest positivity rate in months. Panhandle residents are encouraged to take the important precautions according to the yellow risk level: maintain a physical distance from anyone outside the home, wear a mask, frequently wash or sanitize your hands, be cautious with gatherings and consider outdoor activities when possible, and stay home and get tested if experiencing any COVID-like symptoms.

As of today, 11,324 or 17.3% of Panhandle adults have received the COVID vaccine. Local vaccine providers will continue to vaccinate individuals 65 and older and moving towards other tiers of phase 1b including educators, childcare providers, grocery and convenience store workers, railroad employees, truckers, public transit, postal service, cooperatives, and meat and food processing facility employees.

“There are now three vaccine brands that have received the FDA Emergency Use Authorization- Pfizer, Moderna, & Johnson & Johnson. We anticipate seeing the newest brand in the Panhandle beginning as soon as next week,” said Kim Engel, Panhandle Public Health District Director.

She added, “It’s not a fair assessment to compare one vaccine to the other. Overall, they provide 100% assurance in preventing hospitalizations, 100% assurance in preventing deaths, and 0% difference in the things that matter the most.”

The Federal Retail Pharmacy Program includes three locations in the Panhandle: Alliance Community Pharmacy and Walmart in Chadron and Scottsbluff. All are using the coordinated Panhandle list. This is in addition to the current vaccine providers that have been offering COVID vaccines in the Panhandle.

All Panhandle residents over the age of 18 that have not registered, please do so now at vaccinate.ne.gov or www.pphd.org. Registration is simple and takes less than a couple of

minutes. If you have already registered, rest assured, you are on the list and do not need to register again.

If you need help registering, call either of these numbers: 833-998-2275 or 531-249-1873. The Spanish version will be coming soon.

COVID vaccinations are also available at the Scottsbluff Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) for veterans enrolled in the VA Health Care system. Vaccinations are by appointment only, no walk-ins. Call 308-225-5330 for appointment scheduling.

Vaccines are one of the single greatest achievements in public health, be sure to get your COVID shot when it's your turn. People who are fully COVID vaccinated will not be required to quarantine due to close contact.

If you have had COVID, you are still encouraged to get the vaccine once you no longer have symptoms and after you have been released from isolation. If you received the monoclonal antibody treatment, it is recommended to get the vaccine no sooner than 90 days after treatment.

If you have received your first dose and have not heard when you will receive your second dose, don't panic, you will be contacted by the vaccine provider that administered your first dose.

Four Panhandle residents were announced as the most recent COVID deaths, a Sheridan County female in her 70s and three Scotts Bluff County residents, two males in their 70s and one female in her 70s, bringing the Panhandle total to 186.

"We share peace and comfort with the friends and loved ones in the loss of our fellow Panhandle residents," said Engel.

Unified Command confirms 31 more cases of COVID in the Panhandle since last reporting on Monday, February 22. The investigations are underway, all close contacts will be quarantined.

All Ages: 31	
County	Cases
Banner	1
Box Butte	7
Cheyenne	2
Dawes	9
Deuel	1
Garden	0
Grant	0
Kimball	0

Morrill	0
Scotts Bluff	7
Sheridan	4
Sioux	0

Exposure Type	
Community	52%
Close Contact	48%
Travel	0%
Under Investigation	0%

March 2, 2020-March 1, 2021

- **Total Tests Conducted: 34,824**
- **Positive: 8,685**
- **Last 14 days (active) cases: 103**
- **Last week's cases: 31**
- **Last week's positivity rate: 7.5%**
- **Deaths: 186**
- **Active Hospitalizations: 0**
- **Total Cumulative Hospitalizations: 532**
- **Doubling time (November 12, 2020-March 1, 2021): 110 days**

Avoid the Three Cs:

- **Avoid Crowded Places** – Avoid gathering in groups where you cannot maintain 6-feet of distance from others
- **Avoid Close Contact** – Wear a mask over your nose and mouth or maintain 6-foot distance when you are spending more than 15 total minutes with people you don't live with
- **Avoid Confined Spaces** – Avoid enclosed spaces with poor ventilation

Current COVID testing access can be found at www.pphd.org.

The Panhandle COVID dashboard is updated weekdays at 4:30 pm MT and available at www.pphd.org. For the most up to date information from the CDC, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.

Panhandle Public Health District, Region 21, 22, and 23 Emergency Management, and Scotts Bluff County Health Department are working as a unified command on this evolving situation. Essential updates will be regularly communicated to the public and community partners.

Panhandle Public Health District is working together to improve the health, safety, and quality of life for all who live, learn, work, and play in the Panhandle. Our vision is that we are a healthier and safer Panhandle Community. Visit our website www.pphd.org.