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For immediate release

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## **Mental Health, COVID, & the Holidays**

Seven additional COVID-related deaths in the Panhandle are being reported. This brings the total deaths in the Panhandle to 104. The deaths are being announced as follows:

- Cheyenne County male in his 80s
- Morrill County female in her 80s
- Scotts Bluff County
  - Two females: one in her 80s, one in her 90s
  - Two males: one in his 70s, one in his 90s
- Sheridan County female in her 70s

“We wish to express our sincerest condolences with the friends and loved ones in the loss of our fellow Panhandle residents. We send you peace and comfort especially during this holiday season,” said Kim Engel, Panhandle Public Health District Director.

As we enter a holiday time rich with tradition, consider how you and your family can make the most of it while keeping family, friends, and loved ones safe. Call family and friends to gather thoughts and ideas for virtual games, cooking, decorating, or opening presents.

This is the year for a breather. The holidays can be exciting and full of joy but remember how crazy and stressful the holidays can be? Long travel days, endless to-do lists, extensive cooking, and coordinating schedules for all of the family gatherings normally produce a tremendous amount of stress. Consider how this year provides the opportunity to focus on the most important part of the holidays.

Practice gratitude. There is still much to be thankful for, try to regularly identify and share with others some of the things that you are most grateful for: you and your family’s health, a job, music, friends, and more.

More tips can be found on the Mental Health America website at <https://mhanational.org/preparing-holidays-during-covid-19>.

Unified Command confirms 137 more cases of COVID in the Panhandle since last reporting on Thursday, December 17. Recoveries are available on the Panhandle dashboard at [www.pphd.org](http://www.pphd.org). The investigations are underway, all close contacts will be quarantined.

### All Ages: 137

County	Cases
Banner	0
Box Butte	15
Cheyenne	26
Dawes	10
Deuel	3
Garden	0
Grant	0
Kimball	13
Morrill	6
Scotts Bluff	53
Sheridan	10
Sioux	1

### Exposure Type

Community	47%
Close Contact	37%
Travel	0%
Under Investigation	16%

### March 2-December 21, 2020

- Total Tests Conducted: 29,261
- Positive: 7,300
- Last 14 days cases: 652
- Last week cases: 307
- Last week's positivity rate: 40.1%
- Deaths: 104
- Active Hospitalizations: 27
- Total Cumulative Hospitalizations: 459
- Doubling time (November 7-December 19): 42 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-feet 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](http://www.pphd.org).

The Panhandle COVID dashboard is updated weekdays at 4:30 pm MT and available at [www.pphd.org](http://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](http://www.pphd.org).