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For immediate release

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Steps to take now as COVID-19 cases are getting closer and closer to the Panhandle

We currently have not had any positive COVID-19 tests in the Panhandle. As positive cases are getting closer and closer to the Panhandle, we need to take an additional step in our efforts to flatten the curve. When there is a positive test, the individual and their provider will be notified, and there will be a news release.

A public health investigator will interview the person to find who they have been close to and where they have been for the past 14 days. We will call anyone they have had direct contact with and recommend they self-quarantine.

If needed, we will report any possible public locations in a news release and on our website. Persons would be asked to self-quarantine if they were at the public locations. This is done so potentially exposed people can self-quarantine to reduce spread.

Follow these steps to flatten the curve:

- Practice strict social distancing – 6 feet between people
- Follow the 10 person limit for groups
- Follow travel guidelines to self-quarantine upon returning from travel outside the Panhandle*
- Stay home when you begin showing early signs of being sick
- Be prepared to recall your whereabouts for the past 14 days

*Travel guidelines

To limit spread in Nebraska, all travelers should self-quarantine for 14 days upon returning home and immediately report any symptoms consistent with COVID-19 infection to their health care provider. This means that if they traveled out of the Panhandle, they would be asked to self-quarantine for 14 days upon returning to the Panhandle with these exceptions:

- Residents that support the critical infrastructure of our community, like truckers, are encouraged to continue to provide their vital services. When they are back in the Panhandle, they are encouraged to stay at their house (self-quarantine).

- Traveling to and from work is understandable; the idea is to stay in the same community and practice strict social distancing.
- Health care workers have different guidelines and should consult with a trained medical professional at their facility (infection preventionists or physician) and establish a specific infection control protocol that mitigates patient and co-worker exposures.

Panhandle Public Health District will keep you posted in this quickly changing environment. We continue to monitor the unfolding COVID-19 epidemic to anticipate its impact on the Panhandle. We are working as a unified command with Region 21, 22, and 23 Emergency Managers, and Scotts Bluff County Health Department on this evolving situation. We will continue to communicate important updates to the public and our partners. The CDC is putting out updated guidance daily; for the most up to date information visit:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>. To learn more about COVID-19, go to <https://www.cdc.gov/covid19>.

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.