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Department of Health reports spike in COVID-19 cases in Lea County

SANTA FE – The New Mexico Department of Health reports the number of COVID-19 cases have doubled in less than two weeks in Lea County, located in the southeastern part of the state next to the Texas border. In the past 11 days, the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Lea County increased from 42 to 86 cases, as the department closely monitors the situation and investigates confirmed cases, performs contact tracing, and provides additional testing.

Of the 86 cases, 44 of them are men, and 42 are women with ages of cases ranging from 12 months to 78-years old. Approximately 76 percent of the cases are Hispanic or Latino, followed by 14 percent White, 3 percent Black, 2 percent American Indian or Alaska Native, and an additional five percent that are currently being investigated.

As businesses and other public places where larger and larger groups of people gather continue to reopen, the risk of contracting COVID-19 also rises. The Department of Health reminds everyone that risk will continue until a reliable vaccine is produced and that for now, vigilance and healthy habits remain the best defense against the virus.

Washing hands frequently, covering coughs and sneezes wherever you are as well as wearing facemasks and keeping six feet of social distance from people while in public are a must to avoid contracting and passing on the virus to everyone from loved ones to total strangers.

“COVID-19 has affected our state in a million different ways, from denying us the things we personally love doing to impacting our ability to go to work,” said Department of Health Cabinet Secretary Kathy Kunkel. “If we practice these habits, we’re going to be better able to live our lives without risking our health or anyone else’s.”

The elderly and people with pre-existing health conditions are particularly vulnerable to serious illness or death. Since March, the Secretary of Health has issued a series of public health orders to stay home except for outings that are truly necessary and limit person-to-person contact. The orders have changed over the course of months as the number of illnesses and hospitalizations decreased, but the threat of the COVID-19 virus is still the same.

For more information about what you and your community can do to slow the spread of COVID-19, visit the health department's [COVID-19 website](#) that includes guidance for COVID-19 safe practices, both executive and public health orders, and up-to-date testing information. You can also call the COVID-19 hotline at 1-855-600-3453 for health-related questions or for non-health related questions, call 1-833-551-0518.