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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HEALTH OFFICER DIRECTS BUSINESSES TO REQUIRE FACE COVERING

Benton-Franklin Health Officer Dr. Amy Person issued a Health Officer Directive today for businesses to require the public to use face coverings or refuse service to reduce the spread of COVID-19. The directive will take effect on July 6, 2020.

The directive applies to all businesses in Benton and Franklin Counties, whether they are serving customers inside any building that is open to the public or outdoors. Dr. Person issued the directive at the request of local city and county leaders.

“Both the Washington Secretary of Health and I have issued directives ordering everyone to wear face coverings in public,” said Dr. Amy Person. “Our local compliance is just over 50%, but we need to do better. The local mayors and county commissioners requested that I issue this directive to help reduce our rates of COVID-19 along with the resulting hospitalizations and deaths of our community members. We want to be able to reopen local businesses and we know that widespread use of face masks is effective in preventing the spread of the disease.”

Wearing a face covering can help prevent the spread of infection to others by blocking infectious droplets from spreading when someone with the infection coughs, sneezes, and speaks. People can be infected and contagious before or even without developing symptoms. Evidence suggests a significant number of infections may be transmitted in this way. Face coverings and masks have been effective in other parts of the state and the world in reducing the number of COVID-19 cases.

Dr. Person also stated that face coverings should be used in conjunction with other precautions like maintaining six feet of physical distance between non-household members, avoiding large gatherings, staying home when sick, limiting time in public to essential errands, disinfecting high-touch surfaces, and frequent handwashing or use of hand sanitizer when handwashing facilities are not available.

Individuals are exempt from the order in certain situations as stated in Order of the Secretary of Health [20-03](#).

The full Health Officer Directive, posters, and visual materials are posted at <https://www.bfhd.wa.gov/cms/One.aspx?portalId=10766056&pageId=16781295>

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