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## **Snohomish County Approved to Move to Phase 2**

*Secretary of Health has provided his approval to proceed based on variance proposal*

**SNOHOMISH COUNTY, Wash., June 5, 2020** – Snohomish County and the Snohomish Health District received notification from Secretary of Health John Wiesman today that their [Phase 2 variance application](#) has been approved. [The official approval letter is available online](#), and is effective immediately.

“Snohomish County can now start reopening our businesses and get more people back to work,” said County Executive Dave Somers. “During a pandemic, every step forward must be done carefully, and I am thankful for the work each of us throughout our community has done to get us here today. As we transition into the next phase we must remain vigilant to maintain social distancing and necessary sanitation practices to keep our communities healthy and help our economy recover as quickly as possible. I would like to thank Governor Inslee and Secretary Wiesman for their support in moving Snohomish County to Phase 2. It’s vital that each of our businesses and every county resident carefully review and adhere to the guidance for Phase 2. We still have a ways to go, but this is a first, positive step in the right direction.”

Now that the plan has been approved, Snohomish County businesses authorized to open in Phase 2 may do so as long as they are able to meet their [industry-specific health and safety guidelines](#). General questions about how to comply with the agreement practices can be submitted to the state’s Business Response Center at <https://coronavirus.wa.gov/how-you-can-help/covid-19-business-and-worker-inquiries>.

“Thanks to the hard work and sacrifices of many, we are well-positioned for the next phase here in Snohomish County,” said Stephanie Wright, Chair of the Board of Health and Vice Chair of the County Council. “We need to proceed carefully as a community to ensure cases remain low so that we can continue on this phased re-opening path.”

The Washington State Department of Health recently [launched a risk assessment dashboard](#). Individuals can see data at the county- and state-level relating to the metrics used to determine readiness to move between phases. The Snohomish Health District will also be reporting out on its progress on a weekly basis moving forward.

“We appreciate the time and thoughtful consideration that Secretary Wiesman and his team put into reviewing our proposal, and are glad to hear that they agree that we have the plans and processes in place to move forward,” said Dr. Chris Spitters, Health Officer for the Snohomish Health District. “We will be closely monitoring the data and metrics to ensure we are able to accommodate the potential increase in cases, and adapt as needed, as we begin to open Snohomish County back up.”

While Phase 2 does re-open some businesses and activities, there are still restrictions in place that residents should be aware of. In Phase 2, general guidelines include:

- Gatherings with no more than 5 people from outside your household per week. This includes outdoor recreation like camping, hiking or beach trips.
- High-risk populations – such as people older than 60, those with underlying health conditions, or pregnant women – should continue to stay home aside from essential business and errands.
- Non-essential travel will be limited to activities that are approved to reopen under Phase 2, and those will come with health and safety guidance to follow. For example, restaurants could reopen at limited on-site capacity, with appropriate social distancing, no more than five customers per table, and no bar-area seating.
- For people who can continue to work remotely, teleworking is strongly encouraged.

“Our businesses and residents are ready to safely get back to work, and the transition to Phase II will help do just that,” said Snohomish County Council Chair Nate Nehring. “Our local economy needs this boost, and I’m grateful for the bipartisan effort at the local level to advocate for safe reopening.”

Beginning June 8, all employees will be required to wear a cloth facial covering, except when working alone in an office, vehicle, or at a job site, or when the job has no in-person interaction. Employers must provide cloth facial coverings to employees, unless their exposure dictates a higher level of protection based on safety and health rules and guidance from the Department of Labor and Industries (L&I). Refer to L&I’s [Coronavirus Facial Covering and Mask Requirements](#) for additional details. Employees may choose to wear their own facial coverings at work, provided it meets the minimum requirements.

Employers must also post signage at their place of business strongly encouraging customers to wear cloth facial coverings. Businesses are encouraged to require customers to wear cloth facial coverings, in order to protect employees from exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace.

The City of Everett, in partnership with the Snohomish Health District, has developed a toolkit to help small businesses begin to navigate Phase 2. This resource can help guide business owners as they create a safe reopening plan and welcome back customers in the coming days and weeks. Visit [www.everettforeverett.com/safeopening](http://www.everettforeverett.com/safeopening) for more info and links to signage, or [click here to download the “Getting to Safe” guide](#).

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