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SUBJECT: Regional Statement on Masking Orders

As decisions to vaccinate and wear face coverings in public indoor and outdoor crowded settings drive down COVID-19 case rates and hospitalizations, health officers for two rural Northern California counties that require face coverings in public spaces today reached consensus on criteria to lift those health orders.

All the health officers across the rural Northern California counties continue to work together to protect public health with a consistent regional approach, and to plan for the next phase of response and recovery to COVID-19 as this current wave of the pandemic ebbs.

On Monday, November 8, Del Norte and Humboldt counties will lift the outdoor masking requirements. Additionally, the two counties will lift indoor masking requirement in public spaces not subject to state or federal masking rules when all the following occur:

1. Consistently low and stable COVID-19 cases by [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) data tracker](#)
2. Consistently low and stable hospital impact of respiratory viruses including COVID-19
3. Improved community protection with vaccination.

Both health departments issued the masking requirements for their respective jurisdictions in August following a summer surge in cases, hospitalizations and deaths that were the worst yet for the rural Northern California region.

But now with regional data showing that the surge is receding, and with vaccination rates increasing across the region, our counties want to offer clear guidelines to inform the public when they could expect local masking orders to be removed. Masks and vaccination continue to be our best protections against COVID-19, and these principles support the evidence and science used to make important public health policy decisions.

“It is no accident that transmission has slowed in the rural north of our state. Public health interventions, including masking, are working,” said Dr. Aaron Stutz, Del Norte County’s health officer. “Our health orders, COVID-19 vaccination, as well as outreach and education are all added layers of protection and have resulted in saved lives. Our communities all worked together to lessen the impact of this deadly Delta surge and will continue to work together as we enter recovery.”

“Vaccination is the best way to protect our communities,” said Dr. Ian Hoffman, health officer of Humboldt County, in regards to the masking orders. “We will continually evaluate our progress on vaccination as those numbers help us decide when it will be safe to lift the masking orders.”

[California’s health guidance for the use of face coverings](#) will remain in effect after local masking requirements are lifted, meaning that people who are not fully vaccinated for COVID-19 must continue to wear masks in businesses and indoor public spaces.

The state also requires face coverings for everyone, regardless of vaccination status, in health-care facilities, public transit and adult and senior care facilities. California’s masking guidelines in K-12 schools would also not be affected by changes to local health orders.

For more information about specific guidance for masking, case data, and upcoming vaccination opportunities, please visit covid19.dnco.org

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