



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Howard County Board of Commissioners
Howard County Admin. Center
220 N. Main St.
Kokomo, IN 46901

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County extends Orange Travel Advisory, recommends one cart, one shopper

KOKOMO, IN – The Howard County Board of Commissioners will extend the Orange Travel Advisory through Sunday, April 19, at 5 p.m. as the number of coronavirus cases rise across the county and throughout the state.

As of today, Howard County has 26 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and two reported deaths.

The decisions, announced today at a press conference at the Howard County Government Center, were made in collaboration with Howard County Health Officer Dr. Don Zent, Kokomo Mayor Tyler Moore, Howard County Council, Kokomo Common Council, Ascension St. Vincent Kokomo and Community Howard Regional Health.

“We sincerely appreciate the citizens of Howard County for their sacrifice and cooperation. We recommend everyone continue social distancing, staying home whenever possible. Hopefully, the decisions we make today will keep us from having to consider more drastic choices such as rationing health care and equipment in the future,” said Dr. Zent. “Continuing these measures will allow time to resupply and extend the resources available, along with providing appropriate and maximum care to patients in need. Only by working together can we hope to have the best outcome and be able to lift restrictions as soon as possible.”

To reduce the number of persons shopping, the Commissioners highly encourage everyone to continue practicing social distancing, including implementing a “one adult, one cart” guideline when purchasing essential and non-essential items. Exceptions will be made for single parents and those who need assistance.

In addition, the Howard County Commissioners are designating Sunday, April 12, as a Day of Prayer in our communities.

“We evaluate on a daily basis the impact of the coronavirus in Howard County and heed the advice of medical professionals and other experts when making these decisions,” said Commissioner Paul Wyman. “As we remain on the Orange Travel Advisory, we strongly urge citizens to continue to stay home, travel only as needed and continue to practice social distancing. That’s our best chance to mitigate the risk of spreading the virus in Howard County.

“I can’t thank the citizens of Howard County enough for their efforts in helping combat this virus,” Wyman added.

Dr. Zent also points out the following:

- We are in the acceleration phase of the spread of the virus. All scientific models indicate that, unfortunately, we will see a significant increase in positive cases and deaths.
- Asymptomatic and pre-symptomatic spread has been documented.
- The peak, or maximum number of positive cases per day, is not expected for another 2-3 weeks.
- We need to continue to flatten the curve to decrease the total number of cases in an effort to protect lives as well as reduce the stress on the Health Care System.

The county’s first fatality from the coronavirus was Jeff Bagby, 60, who passed away on Tuesday, March 24. His wife, Chris, fully supports the restrictions placed by the county and city and urges citizens to follow the stay-at-home order.

“We need to be mindful of those in the community serving others, be it in the medical field, law enforcement or other establishments,” Chris Bagby said. “By all means, please stay home. Our family and friends understand all too well the devastating effects of this horrible virus.”

Mayor Moore appreciates the working partnership between county and city governments, making decisions for the overall well-being of Howard County residents.

“I want to express my sincere thanks to the citizens of Kokomo and to our City Common Council for their understanding and support as we all work together with Howard County leaders and business community to best address this unfortunate situation in our community and in our world,” Moore said. “Again, these are unprecedented times, and we realize that the uncertainty surrounding this virus and the requested changes in lifestyles has caused much anxiety. However, it is our hope that we all continue to work together for the betterment of Kokomo and Howard County and greater flattening of the COVID-19 curve.”

“The Howard County Council agrees with the extension of the Orange Travel Advisory and the recommendation of one person, one cart,” stated by the Howard County Council members. “These decisions are made for the health and safety of our residents.”

The Kokomo Common Council conveyed support as well.

“The Common Council is urging the residents of Kokomo and Howard County to respect and follow the extended travel advisory and the one cart, one shopper policy outlined in the ordinance,” stated by the Kokomo Common Council. “It is critical that we as citizens take responsibility for our own actions to curb the continued expansion of the coronavirus. In concert with state and federal government, it is imperative as a community we come together and follow the CDC’s recommendations and the county guidelines as established to lessen the risk our community is experiencing.”

Both local hospitals are in favor of continuing the travel advisory, citing the rising health concerns and the potential impact for local health care workers.

“Ascension St. Vincent is fully supportive of the stay-at-home order and continuing the travel restrictions put in place by City of Kokomo and Howard County officials,” said Margaret M. Johnson, president, Ascension St. Vincent Kokomo.

Community Howard Regional Health President Joe Hooper echoes Johnson’s comments.

“We support the stay-home order and travel restrictions that have been put in place throughout Howard County during this crisis and urge for them to be continued as we know we will continue to see more cases of COVID-19 throughout this area in the coming weeks,” said Joe Hooper, president of Community Howard Regional Health. “Working together, we will get through this difficult time. We ask for the public’s continued help in preventing the spread by staying home as much as possible during this time.”

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