Good morning and thank you for joining us.

I am here with Dr. Dean Sidelinger, our state epidemiologist.

We held a press conference more than a week ago to sound the alarm.

Oregon, we ventured out onto the ice together and that ice has begun to crack. Before we fall through the ice, we need to take additional steps to protect ourselves and our community.

Oregonians have been doing great work to wear face coverings, and we are adjusting our lifestyles in response to the pandemic. So far, that has allowed us to avoid becoming the next New York or Texas.

That said, the COVID-19 virus is continuing to spread too quickly across Oregon. So it’s time for further actions to slow the spread of this disease.

Keep in mind, this is not an on or off switch. This disease is something that, for the time being, we must learn to live with. However, when we see numbers rise, we must respond in turn. We must dim the lights. We must scale back, limit our interactions, take more precautions.

To that end, I am making several changes to Oregon’s rules and guidelines on the pandemic. These will all be effective on Friday, July 24. And these are statewide rules.
First, at the recommendation of the medical experts at the Oregon Health Authority and my Medical Advisory Panel, I am expanding the face covering requirement to include younger children. All children age 5 and older must wear face coverings in public indoor spaces and outdoors where physical distancing cannot be maintained.

If your child is 5 or older, you will need to help them wear a face covering to protect themselves and others. We will keep in place the existing recommendation - not a requirement - for face coverings for children between the ages of 2 and 5. This requirement will be consistent with our guidance for schools. Later today, the Oregon Department of Education will release updated Ready Schools, Safe Learners guidance that includes this particular change among others.

As we continue to learn that transmission of the disease is reduced with face coverings, we are removing some exceptions, including when inside gyms, even when exercising.

Second, I am lowering the gathering size limits for indoor venues, such as larger restaurants, bars, community centers, churches or other houses of worship, movie theaters, and gyms -- from a maximum of 250 people down to 100. This reduction will begin this Friday.

The outdoor venue cap will be maintained at 250 at this time.
We know indoor gatherings pose a much higher risk than outdoors and large groups can easily become super-spreader events if safety precautions are not followed. We need to avoid this in order to save lives.

My order limiting indoor social get-togethers to 10 people remains in place statewide.

Finally, in Phase Two counties, restaurants and bars are currently able to serve food and alcohol until 12 midnight. Starting this Friday, service will end at 10 p.m., statewide.

Some people will hear this announcement and think these restrictions don’t go far enough. They’ll say we should completely close all restaurants and bars. Or move them to outdoor service only.

They are legitimately worried about their family. Their friends. Their neighbors.

Others will hear the news and think these restrictions go too far and are too onerous.

I know that every business that has to close earlier or serve fewer customers will have to contend with even tighter margins to stay afloat.

Here’s what I want every Oregonian to know: I don’t make these decisions lightly. There are no easy choices.

It’s up to all of us to do our part. To look out for one another.

Oregon: We’re going to get through this together.
There are a few more things I want to mention briefly.

First, I anticipate we will provide an update to the County Watch List in a few days.

Several counties on the Watch List continue to experience very rapid spread of the disease, while others may be in a position to be taken off the list because they are seeing fewer sporadic cases and fewer cases overall than at the peak of their local outbreaks.

Unfortunately, we may also need to add a few other counties to the Watch List. We will provide this update to you and to county leaders as soon as it is available.

Second, we are seeing a number of cases due to tourism. I will be taking action to address this soon and my office is talking with our neighboring states about this.

I have already directed my team and the Oregon Health Authority to evaluate the process for restricting tourist travel into Oregon from states with high infection rates -- or requiring mandatory quarantine for people coming here from hot spots.

Together we are taking these steps to protect Oregon. To dim the lights. To slow the spread.

I do have one piece of good news:

We are starting to allow outdoor visits to residents of Long Term Care Facilities where there is no evidence of the virus.
Let me be clear, these are outdoor visits only, and only in facilities where there are not COVID-19 cases.

You can get more information about visiting your loved ones at the Oregon Department of Human Services website.

Finally, I want to talk a bit about schools. Experts at the Oregon Health Authority and the Oregon Department of Education have been working around the clock with local public health professionals to draft clear metrics for school reopening. We expect to release these metrics in the next several days to help districts and school boards large and small make smart decisions.

But one thing is very clear: school this fall will not look like a normal year.

Many, if not most Oregon students are in districts that will focus on online distance learning or have a hybrid model of some online education and limited in-person classroom time.

Whether or not kids return to school buildings this fall, we must provide the very best possible education for every single Oregon student.

I am working with public health officials to make sure the school experience is safe. And I am pushing school officials to make sure underserved and marginalized students -- our kids of color and our low-income kids -- get the support and opportunities they need.
This is all hard. This is really hard. It is lasting much longer and this virus is much tougher to beat than any of us would ever wish.

The COVID-19 virus is extremely contagious. Many more young people are contracting this disease. And many people don’t show symptoms for days.

In that time you can come into contact with dozens or, if you’re not careful, hundreds of other people in your social circle and community.

That’s why the three W’s are so important:
  • Wear a face covering
  • Watch your distance
  • And wash, wash, wash your hands

It may still be possible for us to keep restaurants and shops open; to gather in groups; to continue to hike, camp, and go to parks.

But it all depends on you. Your choices determine our future.

If we don’t slow the spread of the virus, I will have no choice but to force widespread and difficult closures again.

We are truly all in this together.