

As we all aware, Southwest Virginia is currently experiencing our largest Coronavirus-19 spike since the pandemic began earlier this year. While Grayson County's case load is not the highest in Southwest Virginia, we are also affected, and our active case load is also at its highest point.

As is the case in most rural communities, we share resources with our neighbors. Our surrounding counties, towns and communities are suffering with us. Our shared hospital resources are at their limit. Our fire and EMS agencies are struggling with a number of exposed and infected providers, placing even more burden on those remaining. Our public health team is stretched beyond their capacity to take care of our citizens. Our schools have performed beyond our best expectations in continuing to educate our students while keeping them safe, but they are also seeing students and staff impacted by this virus. No one is unaffected by this crisis.

We hoped that the actions of our citizens; wearing masks and practicing social distancing, would be enough to prevent our need to return to a more restrictive setting, but that is no longer the case. In order to protect the citizens of Grayson County and our employees, we are taking the following actions beginning 7 December, 2020 and lasting until 4 January, 2021:

- Public access to government offices and facilities is being strictly limited to those functions that cannot be handled by phone or email. Any citizen needing assistance must call the office with whom they wish to do business. If you do not know the number of the office, call 276-773-2471 for guidance. If the service you are requesting is determined to require entry to the building, you will be met at the door to the Courthouse adjacent to the main parking lot. This action is meant to maximize social distancing, reduce unnecessary public interaction and help to minimize the potential for spread of Coronavirus-19.
- Grayson County Circuit Court Clerk's Office will be open with precautionary measures. Please call 276-773-2231 prior to your visit so that staff may determine if your business can be completed by telephone or if an appointment should be scheduled.
- Grayson County Combined District Court Clerk's Office will be open for business as usual. Please call 276-773-2011 for assistance.
- Grayson County Circuit, District and Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court hearings will be held as scheduled. COVID-19 protocols will continue.
- Town government facilities in Fries, Independence and Troutdale are taking similar precautions to those of the County. Contact town offices for specific information.
- Grayson County Public Schools will remain open. School officials and staff have been very effective in enforcing social distancing practices, reinforcing personal and facility hygiene, mask wearing and the many other practices necessary to allow students to continue to meet in the school setting safely and productively. As we approach living with Coronavirus-19 for a year, we are all tired. That, and our early success in limiting spread of the virus, has made us complacent on a national level. The increase in case load that we are dealing with now is largely a reflection of that complacency over the recent Thanksgiving holiday period. It serves to warn us that, while we have vaccines

coming, we are not out of the woods yet. We need to reapply ourselves to the simple things that each of us can do to control the spread of this deadly virus:

- Wear a mask, please! No one likes it. It's uncomfortable and unpleasant. It is also the single most effective thing that each of us can do to stop the spread of this virus.
- Maintain social distancing wherever possible outside your immediate family group. Avoid close contact with people who may be sick. Limit all gatherings, indoor or out, to fewer than 25 persons.
- Wash your hands well and often.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Stay home when you are sick except to get medical care.

Even if you are unconcerned with contracting COVID-19 yourself, please consider the impact of your actions on those around you. While impact of the virus on you may be minimal, consider our grandparents, parents and children. Consider those already compromised by existing health conditions who might be greatly affected. Consider our emergency responders and health care workers who will be unable to assist others if exposed by you to the virus.

As we move into the Christmas season, please consider your selfless act of taking these small precautions as a gift to all of our fellow citizens. As befits the season, let us place the needs of others above our own convenience. Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays to all.

We Are Grayson County!