

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: November 20, 2020

Contact: GovPress@wisconsin.gov

Gov. Evers Announces New Public Health Emergency Due to Overwhelmed Wisconsin Hospitals, Issues New Face Coverings Order

MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers today declared a new public health emergency in Wisconsin as Wisconsin’s hospitals are operating at or very near full capacity and healthcare providers are struggling to keep up with the demand for care. Executive Order #95 is available [here](#). Emergency Order #1 is available [here](#). Both orders are effective immediately and will expire after 60 days or with a subsequent superseding order.

“Wisconsin hospitals are overwhelmed and facing staffing shortages,” said Gov. Evers. “We continue to see record-setting days of COVID-19 cases in Wisconsin. We need everyone to stay home and wear a mask if you have to go out. We need your help to stop the spread of this virus, and we all have to do this together.”

Wisconsin hospitals in every Healthcare Emergency Readiness Coalition Region are strained, reporting that their intensive care units are often full and that they may no longer be able to accept new patients. More than a third of all hospitals in Wisconsin are operating at peak capacity and are unable to admit new patients. Twenty-one percent of medical surgical beds and thirty-two percent of intensive care unit beds are occupied by COVID-19 patients. With the large and growing influx of COVID-19 patients, there are fewer beds and resources available for people with non-COVID-19 conditions who require hospitalizations.

The surge in patients has caused ripple effects through the hospital system, with intermediate care units treating more patients who would otherwise be transferred to the intensive care unit and fewer transfers to larger hospitals for patients needing higher levels of care.

In addition to the lack of hospital beds, hospitals are facing widespread staffing shortages. Over a third of Wisconsin hospitals are reporting critical staffing shortages. Forty-two percent of hospitals expect a critical staffing shortage within a week. Multiple hospital systems have requested and received staffing assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

“The current surge in cases are overwhelming our hospitals,” said Department of Health Services (DHS) Secretary-designee Andrea Palm. “We know hospitalizations are a lagging indicator, which means we will need even more capacity for our hospitals in the coming weeks with our current cases. We need every Wisconsinite to take this seriously to stay home. That is why it is imperative we take action to curb transmission now – to protect residents of Wisconsin in every corner of the state.”

Wisconsin is experiencing unprecedented, near-exponential growth of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the average daily number of new cases currently at 6,254, almost double the average daily cases seen a month ago, and an increase of 260% since September 20, when the average case number was 1,720.

With today's new face covering order, Wisconsin residents ages five and older are required to wear a face covering when they are indoors or in an enclosed space with anyone outside their household or living unit.

For up-to-date information about Wisconsin's COVID-19 response, visit the [DHS COVID-19 webpage](#). We also encourage you to follow @DHSWI on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#), or dhs.wi on [Instagram](#) for more information on COVID-19.

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