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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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City Public Health Department Updates Safer Racine Ordinance

Uncontrolled virus spread and holiday concerns lead to increased measures

City of Racine – Dottie-Kay Bowersox, Public Health Administrator for the City of Racine, has completed a new round of revisions to the Safer Racine ordinance that was originally passed by the Racine Common Council on June 22, 2020. Given the activity level of the virus and its seemingly uncontrolled spread throughout the community, the City of Racine Public Health Department has determined that additional measures and restrictions on gatherings and occupancy in public and private venues are needed to slow the spread of COVID-19 in the community. The Safer Racine ordinance applies to just the City of Racine and this update goes into effect at 12:01am November 27, 2020.

Since Labor Day, the City of Racine has identified more than 3,400 COVID-19 new cases. This represents an increase of 250 percent in just 2.5 months compared to the first six months of the pandemic, at a current positivity rate of 31 percent. Twenty new COVID-19 deaths have been reported since Labor Day, bringing the total number of deaths to 53. During the same time period, Racine County overall has identified more than 8,300 new cases, an increase of 300 percent, and has had 65 new deaths, bringing the total numbers of deaths to 157. Wisconsin remains a hot spot in the nation, averaging more than 6,500 new cases a day.

The updated ordinance comes right before a series of holidays, in which the CDC, healthcare providers, and government leaders are urging people to stay in their homes and only celebrate with members of their immediate household. After each major holiday, the City has seen an increased spike in COVID-19 cases.

“COVID-19 is being spread throughout the community in terms of numbers of cases and positivity rates that we have never seen before. Outbreaks continue to be linked to gatherings of friends and family on private property with people from outside of their immediate households including sports parties, baby showers, backyard gatherings, and wedding receptions. Additionally, we continue to see activity at local manufacturers, retailers, bars, and restaurants,” **said Dottie-Kay Bowersox, City of Racine Public Health Administrator.**

Bowersox continued, “Since the onset of the pandemic, after every major holiday, significant spikes in positive cases occur because individuals are not taking the personal responsibility to abide by best practices to ensure that they and others do not contract the virus. Given that, the Public Health Department fully expects to see a sharp increase in cases yet again between Thanksgiving, “Back Friday”, Christmas, and the New Year.”

“I am fully aware of the disappointment and anger that some in the community will feel at new measures and restrictions being issued. I understand that we are all ready for COVID-19 to be gone. However, we will continue to have to make these tough decisions to slow the spread of COVID-19 until everyone in this community takes personal responsibility for slowing the spread of this virus. The community must realize that inconveniences now, like wearing a mask properly and not participating in family gatherings outside of your immediate household, are necessary to protect public health and save lives long-term,” **added Public Health Administrator Bowersox.**

“As difficult as it has been, I am confident that the City of Racine is in a much better place than the rest of the region because we have kept certain restrictions in place over time. I cannot thank enough the individuals and businesses who continue to abide by the best practices of washing hands frequently, wearing masks properly, staying home as much as possible with just their immediate household members, and only going out for essential services. Until there is a vaccine that is distributed to the vast majority of the population, we all need to stay vigilant and take personal responsibility to combat the spread of this virus throughout the community,” **concluded Bowersox.**

The updated Safer Racine plan includes modifications to rules for long term care facilities, daycares, indoor recreational facilities, pools, zoos, mass gatherings, and other venues.

Updated rule changes include reductions in capacity of bars and restaurants to 25%, and 50% capacity in all retail establishments including personal care facilities, like salons and tattoo parlors, as long as social distancing can be maintained. Long term care facilities, childcare, and daycare programs receive additional guidance and restrictions on interactions of their clients. Indoor recreational facilities such as gyms and yoga studios also have reduced capacity to 25% as long as social distancing can be maintained. Special events at places of worship, outdoor places of amusement and activity, and both indoor and outdoor mass gatherings at private venues are limited to 50 people with some exemptions.

Full details and copies of the updated “Safer Racine” ordinance can be found here:

<https://www.racinecoronavirus.org/reopening/>. Business description and restrictions can be found starting on page 12 of the document.

Questions about the update to the Safer Racine Ordinance should be directed to the City of Racine Public Health Department at 262-636-9201 or publichealth@cityofracine.org. Enforcement of the ordinance is done in partnership between the Public Health Department and the Racine Police Department. Enforcement actions can result in forfeitures and potential loss of licenses to operate.

About the City of Racine

With a population of 78,000, **Racine, Wisconsin** is the fifth largest municipality in the state of Wisconsin. It is home to manufacturing businesses that enjoy world-wide reputations, SC Johnson, CNH Industrial, Twin Disc, Modine, and In-Sink-Erator among them. Racine is also home to diverse cultures, a thriving downtown, and world-class beaches along the shores of Lake Michigan.

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