



MEDIA RELEASE

San Juan County

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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San Juan County Leaders URGE Residents to Restrict Off-Island Travel and Follow Strict Health Guidelines Upon Returning

As Washington State approaches the anticipated peak of COVID-19 medical surge cases, San Juan County urges everyone to take more aggressive precautions to protect their families and neighbors when coming to the islands from the mainland.

“As cases multiply throughout the state, including Skagit, Island, and Whatcom Counties, islanders traveling back to the islands from the mainland are risking becoming a source of disease spread,” said San Juan County Health Officer, Dr. Frank James, MD.

Dr. James continues, “island residents have done a great job self-isolating and maintaining social distancing. All that hard work could be erased by a single trip to the mainland. It is proven that continuing social distancing and slowing the spread of this pandemic is directly saving lives.”

Rick Hughes, Chair of the San Juan County Council agrees, “The State and our county have issued emergency declarations limiting travel and other activities to prevent the spread of COVID-19. We have done this to protect our family, friends and our neighbors. Going off-island or coming to the islands from the mainland is a risk to our community health at this moment in the pandemic.”

Chair Hughes continued, “First off, we want to very strongly discourage anyone from thinking about coming to the islands as an “escape”. Don’t willfully break the Governor’s order in order to come here. We also want to urge all islanders to rethink plans to go off island unless it is vital and necessary. Please reschedule appointments and stay home.”

Clearly deliveries of fuel, food, and other supplies will continue unabated. As will those traveling for essential reasons as outlined in the Governor’s order.

San Juan County has outlined the following recommendations for islanders returning from essential mainland travel, no matter the length of the trip:

- Follow the Governor’s order limiting all non-essential travel
- Aggressive handwashing prior, during and following an allowed trip
- A self-imposed 14-day quarantine after return to ensure COVID-19 containment
- Having supplies on hand for quarantine in advance of mainland travel

“We know this is a tremendous inconvenience for our island communities. As islanders, we are dependent on many mainland services. This is a time of great sacrifice for the greater good of the people of the San Juan Islands,” said Council Chair Hughes.

Dr. James added, “A trip to a grocery outlet, or a routine medical appointment can fully change our islands’ safety, health and the speed of our recovery. We recognize that some islanders may be regularly commuting to the mainland for essential reasons, and for them the 14-day quarantine is impractical, but for everyone else, we think it is vital to follow these recommendations.”

San Juan County health officials remind everyone that if you feel sick and have mild symptoms, stay home. If you feel you have more serious symptoms or if you are at risk for severe illness, stay home and call your health provider. Do not go directly to a clinic or to the hospital. Follow your doctor or health professional’s direction. If you feel the situation is urgent and life threatening, call 911.

For more information please visit our informational webpage at www.sjccovid.com
This website is updated as new information becomes available. You can also visit the San Juan County Health and Community Services Facebook page.

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