



COVID ALERT

San Juan County

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: December 23, 2020

REQUEST for IMPROVEMENTS to BUILDING TRADE SAFETY PROTOCOLS

Recent San Juan County COVID case investigations have revealed a trend of lax COVID safety protocols on various construction and building sites across the islands.

As in any workplace, consistent masking is a critical tool for preventing disease transmission. Work done alone or outside with greater than six feet of separation does not require masking, but given the nature of the trade, all indoor work or outdoor work done in close proximity to others needs to be done while masked in order to protect against COVID transmission.

Clearly a work setting with multiple sub-contractors, a mix of indoor and outdoor work, rigid timelines, and the need for close cooperation on many tasks makes for a challenging safety environment. That said, construction continuing to operate normally depends on keeping job sites from becoming sources of COVID spread.

As recent business linked cases have shown, the impacts of having all or many employees quarantined for 14 days are significant. Some key reminders highlighted by recent cases:

- There is community spread in the islands. The risk is real and the risk is here.
- What individuals do beyond the job site matters. Recent cases have highlighted that decisions around travel and social gatherings can dramatically impact local business operations.
- In the event of a confirmed positive case, sharing complete and accurate information with public health is critical to ensuring rapid containment of spread. While it may be uncomfortable to share information that highlights lapses, please know that public health staff are focused on containing the disease, not on pointing fingers or assigning blame to individuals. They are here to work with you and for you, and to keep our community safe. Transparent and accurate information is the most valuable tool there is.

Business owners and project managers are strongly encouraged to take a personal interest in ensuring consistent masking on job sites. A best practice is to assign the role of "safety manager" to someone on site who has the challenging but vitally important job of ensuring compliance. Keeping any industry or business safe is the key to keeping any industry or business up and running, and particularly so in the challenging time of COVID.