



MEDIA RELEASE

San Juan County

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 04, 2021

A Plea to the Community on Travel, New Variants, and Keeping the Islands Safe: DON'T TRAVEL, DON'T HOST.

1. As was seen in the islands over the holidays and throughout this crisis, island residents traveling off-island or hosting guests from off-island is far and away the most likely source of COVID transmission in San Juan County.
2. As most are aware, several new variants of COVID are spreading rapidly across the world. Based on current models, it is expected that those variants will become the dominant strains of the disease in Washington by sometime in March or early April.
3. While details are still coming into focus, these variants are approximately 50% more infectious than the current strain. Again, the science is evolving and is far from definitive, but they may also result in more severe illness, and may reduce the effectiveness of some vaccines.
4. The only way these strains will make their way to San Juan County is from infected individuals bringing them to the islands.
5. Up to 40% of individuals infected with COVID have no symptoms, feel perfectly healthy, and would not suspect that they can spread the disease.
6. It is almost certain that the new variants will cause a new and significantly larger number of cases.
7. Island schools are beginning to reopen, and case numbers are dropping in WA, but all of that will reverse quickly if steps to minimize spread are not taken.
8. As was true over the winter holidays, the best way to keep the islands safe is simple: **DON'T TRAVEL, DON'T HOST**. There is room for common sense: going to the mainland to shop for the day is OK. Traveling in a car with your household, going off-island for medical care, staying in a vacation rental with no contact with others- these are OK. Airplanes, staying with others, socializing indoors, going to another state or country, etc. – not OK.
9. For those islanders who insist on traveling or hosting, please: **QUARANTINE FOR TWO WEEKS UPON RETURN. DON'T GO TO WORK, DON'T SOCIALIZE, DON'T INTERACT WITH THE COMMUNITY**. If these are things that you are unwilling or unable to do, then: **DON'T TRAVEL, DON'T HOST**. Employers should insist on this from their employees and employees should do it out of respect for their co-workers and employers.
10. Don't host or attend Super Bowl parties (go Chiefs!).
11. This isn't easy, it isn't fun. To date the islands have had one of the lowest case rates in the United States. That is true to a large degree because of the sacrifice and thoughtfulness of islanders. Let's keep it up.