



# MEDIA RELEASE

## San Juan County

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: August 12, 2021

### **San Juan County Health Officer Reinstates Masking Requirements**

As per a [recent Health Officer order](#), all customers entering businesses in San Juan County will be required to mask up beginning at 5pm on Friday August 13<sup>th</sup>.

San Juan County Health Officer Dr. Frank James highlights his thinking, "First off, I want to say that I truly hoped that vaccination rates in our nation would be high enough that this moment wouldn't come. But hospital beds are filling quickly with COVID patients, and our regional healthcare system is beginning to struggle. We all need to sacrifice to reduce that strain, even those of us who are vaccinated."

This order is identical to the previous masking requirement in San Juan County that was lifted on June 30<sup>th</sup>.

Dr. James explains the situation, "Those who are vaccinated are not causing the immediate problem, since they are extremely unlikely to be hospitalized. However, vaccinated individuals can transmit the disease in some cases. As we have seen over and over through the pandemic, masking up does reduce caseloads, and that's the goal of course."

With other jurisdictions in Washington implementing similar orders, San Juan County is part of a coordinated effort to try to preserve capacity in the regional medical and public health system.

San Juan County Health & Community Services Director Mark Tompkins sympathizes with those who are frustrated, "My team is exhausted and stretched and we're all so disappointed that we're facing a new surge in cases that was completely preventable. The Delta variant is highly infectious, and that combined with so many unvaccinated individuals is causing this crisis. While vaccination rates in the islands are relatively high, they're not perfect and there are many across Washington and beyond who are making the choice to remain unvaccinated. We count on mainland hospitals for our advanced care and doing all we can to help reduce need is our duty."

The masking order will remain in place until lifted, something that will happen once case volumes have returned to baseline levels.

Businesses looking for no-nonsense signage announcing the order may utilize these flyers: [VERSION 1](#) / [VERSION 2](#).