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Tighter rules for DuPage, Kane, Will

New limits starting Wednesday include no groups bigger than 10

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People line up to get a COVID-19 test at the DuPage County fairgrounds



Gov. J.B. Pritzker gives a COVID-19 update on Monday.

Gov. J.B. Pritzker on Monday announced that heightened restrictions on DuPage, Kane, Kankakee and Will counties will take effect Wednesday as COVID-19 surges with 10,573 new cases and 14 more deaths from the respiratory disease reported Monday.

The number of patients in hospitals with the virus came to 4,409 as of Sunday night, the highest tally since May 13. The total seven-day average of hospitalizations is 4,042.6, up nearly 31% from 3,090 a day between Oct. 26 and Nov. 1, according to Illinois Department of Public Health data.

It's been more than two weeks since the state imposed restrictions, such as no indoor dining in DuPage and Kane (Region 8) and Will and Kankakee (Region 7), after the four counties surpassed an 8% virus case positivity rate. Those rates haven't diminished. As of Sunday, DuPage's seven-day average rate was 13.9%, Kane's was 18.4%, Will's was 17.5%, and Kankakee's was 15%.

"Too many local officials across the state are ignoring their local public health departments and doing nearly nothing to assist residents in following even the most basic COVID-19 guidelines," Pritzker said.

Leaders “need to take some responsibility for keeping constituents safe. I promise them that responsibility will pale between what comes when hospitals in your area are filling up and there’s not enough doctors and nurses to save their constituents’ lives.”

New rules will include reducing the size of parties eating outdoors at bars and restaurants from 10 to six and closing at 11 p.m. And the size of social gatherings, such as weddings or professional meetings, will be limited to 10 people per room, rather than 25, indoors and outdoors.

The tighter restrictions, known as Tier 2 mitigations, go into effect Wednesday.

Around the region, some leaders including the mayors of Libertyville and Itasca have said they are worried about the economic future of restaurants and won’t enforce restrictions. Asked about Pritzker’s warning, Itasca Mayor Jeff Pruyn had no comment Monday.

Meanwhile, Republican state Sen. Don DeWitte of St. Charles is dubious about the state’s rationale for closing indoor dining. State officials have said contract tracing interviews with patients show restaurants and bars as a high-risk activity.

“I think the governor had doubled down on his decision without providing the transparency that these business owners are owed about this mitigation dramatically affecting their businesses,” DeWitte said.

The state already imposed Tier 2 rules on northwest Illinois, which includes Rockford, Northern Illinois University and Galena, on Oct. 25. Those actions did not require schools to halt in-person learning.

Elgin Area School District U-46, which extends into Cook, DuPage and Kane, still intends to proceed with offering in-person instruction Tuesday for kindergarten through second grade.

However, just hours after the decision, Downers Grove School District 58 announced it would switch to fully remote learning temporarily, Nov. 16-30, because of a rise in cases.

The state’s virus positivity rate is 11.4% based on a seven-day average, the highest since May and indicative of a continued climb. The daily positivity rate is 16.3%, although that reflects a below-average number of tests.

Pritzker also confirmed that after a Nov. 2 meeting with restaurant industry members, one of those representatives tested positive for COVID-19 Friday. That person developed symptoms Thursday, three days after the meeting, and therefore was outside a two-day window where exposure to the virus could occur, IDPH Director Ngozi Ezike said. Pritzker has tested negative for COVID-19 since.

Tests processed by state labs reached 64,760 in the last 24 hours. The week’s average is 84,663.

The total number of virus infections is 498,560, while Illinoisans dying from the pandemic total 10,210.

The tally of daily and cumulative virus cases reflects a new IDPH policy enacted Friday of combining possible and confirmed infections.

By lumping those cases together, state officials said they are following U.S. Centers for Disease Control protocols, but it means comparisons between Illinois caseloads since the pandemic began and as of Friday won't parallel exactly.

In DuPage County this week, the state is offering pop-up COVID-19 testing:

- 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday at Churchville Middle School, 155 Victory Parkway, Elmhurst.
- 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday at the Bartlett North Metra lot.
- 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Thursday at the Glendale Heights Aquatic Center parking lot, 240 Civic Center Plaza.