

Gov. Wolf Announces Reopening of 24 Counties Beginning May 8

Harrisburg, PA – Balancing economic benefits and public health risks, Governor Tom Wolf today announced the reopening of 24 counties in the northwest and north-central regions of the state, moving them from red to yellow beginning at 12:01 a.m., Friday, May 8.

“Over the past two months, Pennsylvanians in every corner of our commonwealth have acted collectively to stop the spread of COVID-19,” Gov. Wolf said. “We have seen our new case numbers stabilize statewide and while we still have areas where outbreaks are occurring, we also have many areas that have few or no new cases.”

Counties Moving to Yellow Reopening

The 24 counties that will move from red to yellow on May 8 are: Bradford, Cameron, Centre, Clarion, Clearfield, Clinton, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest, Jefferson, Lawrence, Lycoming, McKean, Mercer, Montour, Northumberland, Potter, Snyder, Sullivan, Tioga, Union, Venango, and Warren.

These counties were deemed ready to move to a reopening – or yellow phase – because of low per-capita case counts, the ability to conduct contact tracing and testing, and appropriate population density to contain community spread.

Decision Process

The administration partnered with Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) to create a [Risk-Based Decision Support Tool](#) that enables decision makers to strike a balance between maximizing the results of our economy while minimizing public health risks.

The CMU tool looked at the impacts of risk factors such as reported number of COVID cases per population of an area; ICU and medical/surgical bed capacity; population density; population over age 60; re-opening contact risk, such as the number of workers employed in a currently closed industry sector.

The CMU metrics were considered along with the county’s or region’s ability to conduct testing and contact-tracing to first and foremost maintain robust public health.

The Department of Health developed [testing](#) and [contact-tracing plans](#) that informed today’s decisions and will be used in making decisions moving forward. Factors include: having enough testing available for individuals with symptoms and target populations such as those at high risk, health care personnel, and first responders, and the ability to perform robust case investigation and have in place a contact-tracing infrastructure that can quickly identify a cluster of outbreaks to issue any necessary isolation and quarantine orders.

All reopening decisions follow the [six standards](#) outlined in the governor’s plan to reopen Pennsylvania. These include adhering to:

- Data-driven and quantifiable criteria to drive a targeted, evidence-based, regional approach to reopening.
- Clear guidance and recommendations for employers, individuals, and health care facilities and providers for assured accountability.

- Adequate and available personal protective equipment and diagnostic testing.
- A monitoring and surveillance program that allows the commonwealth to deploy swift actions for containment or mitigation.
- Protections for vulnerable populations such as limitations on visitors to congregate care facilities and prisons.
- Limitations on large gatherings unrelated to occupations.

“Our goal since this pandemic was first identified in Pennsylvania has been to save lives while ensuring that the public health system does not become overwhelmed with people suffering from COVID-19,” Department of Health Secretary Dr. Rachel Levine said. “Our contact tracing and testing plans will ensure that as we begin to resume our daily activities, we can do so safely and without fear.”

While both Gov. Wolf and Dr. Levine cautioned that we cannot be certain of the path of the virus, all decisions on partial reopening are driven first by prioritizing the health and safety of Pennsylvanians.

Defining the Yellow Phase

As regions or counties move into the yellow phase, some restrictions on work and social interaction will ease while others, such as closures of schools, gyms, and other indoor recreation centers, hair and nail salons, as well as limitations around large gatherings, remain in place.

On Monday, May 4, the administration will release guidance for businesses permitted to reopen on May 8 in these 24 counties. The guidance is being developed through collaboration with the affected counties, Team PA, the Department of Health, the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, the Department of Community and Economic Development and the Department of Labor & Industry, among others. Guidance will build on existing safety and building safety orders released in April.

Work & Congregate Setting Restrictions

- Telework Must Continue Where Feasible
- Businesses with In-Person Operations Must Follow Business and Building Safety Orders
- Child Care Open Complying with Guidance
- Congregate Care and Prison Restrictions in Place
- Schools Remain Closed for In-Person Instruction

Social Restrictions

- Stay at Home Order Lifted for Aggressive Mitigation
- Large Gatherings of More than 25 Prohibited
- In-Person Retail Allowable, Curbside and Delivery Preferable
- Indoor Recreation, Health and Wellness Facilities and Personal Care Services (such as gyms, spas, hair salons, nail salons and other entities that provide massage therapy), and all Entertainment (such as casinos, theaters) Remain Closed
- Restaurants and Bars Limited to Carry-Out and Delivery Only

All businesses not specifically mentioned as restricted from reopening may reopen if they follow the forthcoming guidance.

Moving Forward

Gov. Wolf stressed the need for all Pennsylvanians to now, more than ever, take personal responsibility for their actions.

“Every human-to-human contact is a chance for the virus to spread, so more contacts mean a higher likelihood of an outbreak,” Wolf said. “If we see an outbreak occur in one of the communities that has been moved to yellow, we will need to take swift action, and revert to the red category until the new case count falls again. So, Pennsylvanians living in a county that has been moved to the yellow category should continue to strongly consider the impact of their actions.”

Counties that will remain under the stay-at-home order will be considered for reopening in the next several weeks as the state continues to closely monitor metrics and collaborate with CMU, health experts and counties.