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NEWS RELEASE--FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: October 15, 2020

Weekly review of COVID-19 data shows case trends, positivity rates, and hospital impact headed toward critical risk levels in three counties.

SOUTH CENTRAL IDAHO – Three south central Idaho counties are headed toward critical (red) risk levels as case counts and positivity rates reported to South Central Public Health District (SCPHD) are surging in Twin Falls, Cassia, and Minidoka counties. The regional hospital status is critical, as staffing and bed availability has been severely impacted by COVID-19.

“Our case trends and the impact we are seeing to our healthcare system is alarming,” said Melody Bowyer, SCPHD District Director. “If we continue this course we will likely reach critical risk level by next Thursday in several counties.”

Case counts in the rest of the district are also trending upward (see graph 1), with the majority of cases in the region reported in young people ages 18-39 years old (see graphs 2 and 3). Since August, cases reported among children ages 5 to 17 in the region have increased dramatically. Two of these cases have developed multisystem inflammatory syndrome (MIS-C), a severe and potentially fatal condition associated with COVID-19.

“Young people are not immune to this disease. Our concern is that our youth will be infected and pass the disease on to the rest of their household- including their elderly and vulnerable family members,” said Bowyer. “Our investigators have found many individuals who have tested positive recently attended small social gatherings, like sporting events, where they may have accidentally spread the virus.”

Case counts have recently surged to more than 120 cases reported a day on average across the district (see graph 4). **In the last calendar week, October 4th**

to 10th, more than 840 cases were reported. That is more cases than were reported in March and April combined. As cases surge, investigators and close contact tracers are racing to keep up.

“Don’t wait for public health to call you. We are working quickly and expanding our staffing but, in some cases, it still may take a few days to make contact,” Tanis Maxwell, Epidemiology Program Manager. “Don’t wait to reach out. Let your close contacts know as soon as you get your test results so they can quarantine and keep the virus from spreading further.”

Close contacts are people who have spent at least 15 minutes within six feet of a person who has a confirmed case of COVID-19. Contact tracing should include people who have had that contact up to two days before symptoms began or someone tested positive for COVID-19. Close contact should quarantine for 14 days starting the day after their last contact with a confirmed case. Individuals who have tested positive should completely isolated for at least 10 days and meet other epidemiological criteria before they leave their home.

“Our case counts are surging beyond anything we’ve seen so far in this pandemic,” said Bowyer. “We need to put our politics and personal differences aside to come together and protect our community.”

Most counties in south central Idaho are currently in the high risk (orange) tier for COVID-19 spread. Among other recommendations, SCPHD urges all residents in these communities wear masks in public places, take extra precautions at sporting events, limit gatherings to fifty or fewer people, and high-risk individuals take extra precautions to safeguard their health.

A full list of recommendations for both the high (orange) and critical (red) risk levels can be found in the regional risk level plan at <https://phd5.idaho.gov/coronavirus>.

More information:

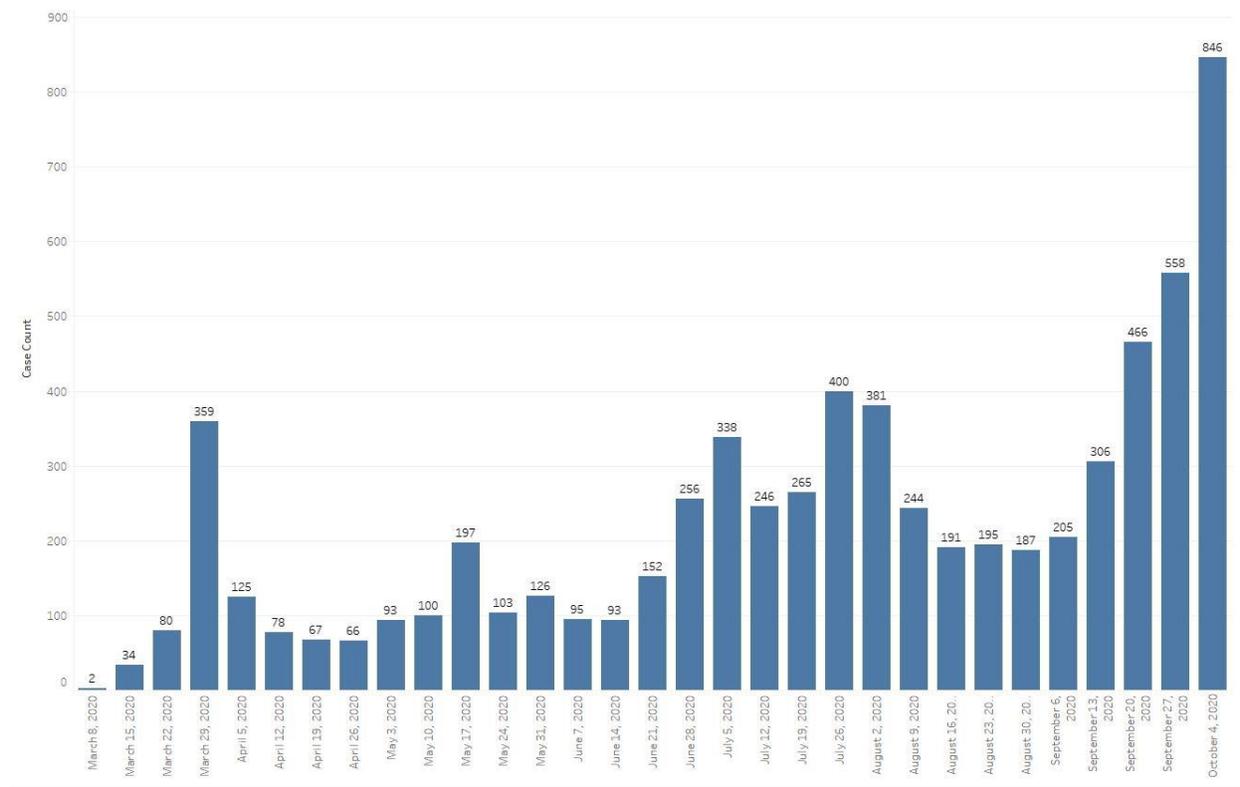
SCPHD is running two hotlines for information about COVID-19: one in Spanish, at (208) 737-5965, and one in English at (208) 737-1138. The hotline is open on business days from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and weekends from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Please refer to <https://phd5.idaho.gov/coronavirus> for daily numbers, guidance, and resources.

NEW Please refer to <https://phd5.idaho.gov/COVID-school> for guidance and resources specific to students, parents, and school staff.

Refer to <https://phd5.idaho.gov/coronavirus-dashboard/> for weekly demographic and data. This data is updated weekly on Wednesdays.

Graph 1: Total number of cases by week they were reported from March 8th to October 10th. (Data is organized by the first day of each week and includes cases reported over the next six days. Each bar represents 7 days of case reports.)



Graph 2: Percent of total cases by month and age across the district

	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October
0-17	0.43%	3.75%	8.73%	10.70%	8.90%	9.93%	13.48%	9.84%
18-39	25.96%	34.29%	47.63%	48.95%	47.57%	48.90%	39.23%	36.76%
40-59	38.30%	34.82%	29.22%	27.02%	29.32%	28.49%	28.46%	31.73%
60+	35.32%	27.14%	14.42%	13.33%	14.21%	12.68%	18.83%	21.67%

Graph 3: Percent of total cases by age and county

	0-4	5-10	11-13	14-17	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70+
Blaine	2.29%	3.82%	1.53%	6.87%	18.32%	17.56%	19.08%	16.03%	3.82%	10.69%
Camas	2.78%	8.33%	8.33%	44.44%	5.56%	11.11%	11.11%	5.56%	2.78%	
Cassia	0.61%	0.92%	3.37%	5.21%	22.09%	17.18%	14.11%	12.58%	11.96%	11.96%
Gooding	3.16%	3.16%	2.63%	5.79%	19.47%	16.32%	14.74%	16.32%	7.37%	11.05%
Jerome	1.56%	1.82%	2.08%	7.81%	25.78%	18.75%	16.15%	13.02%	9.38%	3.65%
Lincoln	6.67%	4.44%	6.67%	2.22%	26.67%	13.33%	20.00%	15.56%	2.22%	2.22%
Twin Falls	1.25%	1.72%	2.18%	5.85%	27.61%	18.02%	16.38%	11.08%	7.80%	8.11%
Minidoka	1.80%	1.20%	0.90%	4.49%	22.75%	20.66%	14.07%	17.66%	8.68%	7.78%

Graph 4: Cases reported by day in the last full calendar week (October 4th-10th)

