

ELKO COUNTY
EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER
571 Idaho Street
Elko, NV 89801

ELKO COUNTY COVID-19 ASSESSMENT PLAN

Revised November 4, 2020

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

Elko County is the fourth largest county in the continental United States covering just over 11 million acres or 17,000 square miles with over 70% of our land being federally managed land. Elko County has a cumulative population of 55,116 according to the [2019 Nevada State Demographer's Certified Estimate](#). Within the borders of the County are four incorporated cities (Elko, Carlin, Wells, and West Wendover), three unincorporated towns (Jackpot, Montello, and Mountain City) and several other rural communities, including Spring Creek. Approximately 90% of the County's population resides within a 20-mile radius of the City of Elko. Spring Creek is approximately ten miles south of Elko and is the second largest homeowner's association in the United States with approximately 13,000 residents. It is also the second most populated community in Elko County. Every community across the State is faced with unique challenges as the situation and response to COVID-19 evolves. Elko County communities are no exception.

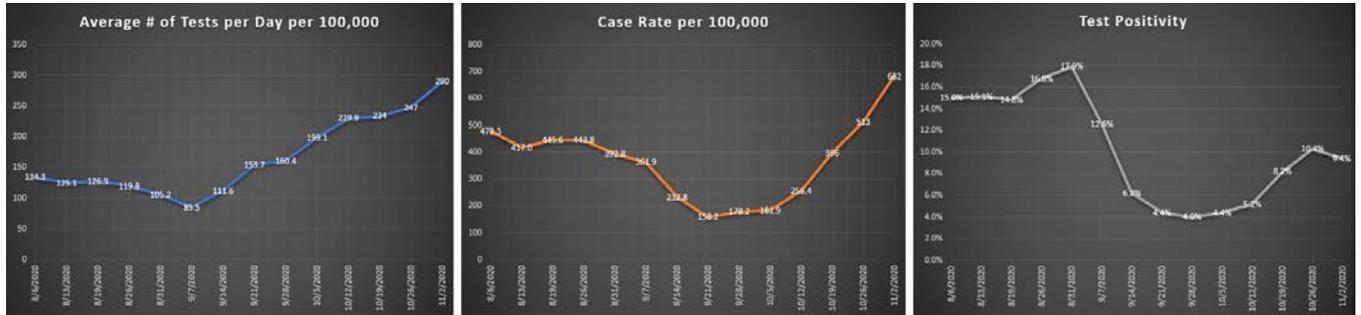
Pursuant to Nevada Revised Statute 441A, the Nevada Division of Public and Behavioral Health (DPBH) is the health authority for Elko County and most other rural and frontier counties in the State. Immediately following the Governor's emergency closure of schools in mid-March, Elko County stood up the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) under a Unified Command Team structure consisting of the County Health Officer, Emergency Manager, and command staff. The focus of the EOC was to provide immediate, local response to our communities, including five neighboring counties, and to support the State in unprecedented times knowing that resources were, and continue to be, limited.

Elko County experienced a 54% increase in confirmed cases in the month of October. The increase is consistent with many other counties in Nevada and surrounding states with much of the increase attributed to community spread and clusters among families and friends. As the weather gets cooler, we expect social gatherings to move indoors where the virus spreads more easily. Individuals tend to be better at wearing face coverings in the workplace and in public settings, than around loved ones and friends in private spaces. With increased community spread our essential workforce including healthcare workers and first responders are impacted by either contracting COVID-19 themselves or because they have been exposed outside of the workplace, requiring self-isolation.

On October 30, 2020, Elko County team members met with Dr. Birx, coordinator of the White House coronavirus task force, where she advised that lockdowns and closures are counterproductive to mitigating the spread of the virus. Instead she indicated a balanced, aggressive approach is key to changing the trajectory we are on. An approach which requires adequate access to testing with acceptable turnaround times. This is not currently the case and hasn't been as Elko County and other rural counties have consistently advised the Task Force for

months. Lengthy test turnaround time has been one of the factors leading to the upward trend in cases. In addition to adequate testing, together as a community, we must get better at wearing masks in personal settings to protect others from getting infected.

Below are the trends of the current criteria being used to determine elevated risk of disease transmission, which include average number of tests per 100,000 people, case rate per 100,000 people, and test positivity rate. These trends reference data between August 6, 2020 and November 2, 2020.



HOSPITAL CAPACITY

Describe the state of hospital capacity within the county, including:

Describe the status of staffed ICU beds, ventilators, staffing, medication treatments, and PPE.

Elko County continues to collaborate with Northeastern Nevada Regional Hospital (NNRH) to closely monitor overall capacity to treat and care for all patients, not only those with COVID-19. NNRH has ten designated rooms to isolate and treat COVID-19 patients, including a negative pressure room. Through the pandemic, staffing and occupancy has been good.



2 November 2020 Data Set

Region/ County	# of Licensed In Patient Beds	# of staffed patient beds	Hospital Census	% Licensed Beds Occupied	% Staffed Beds Occupied	# of Licensed (Adult) ICU Beds	How many (ADULT) ICU beds are occupied?	% (Adult) ICU Beds Occupied	Total # of Ventilators	How many ventilators are currently in use?	% Ventilators in Use	CONFIRMED COVID-19 Cases	# SUSPECTED COVID-19 Cases	# confirmed or suspected COVID-19 patients in ICU	# confirmed or suspected COVID-19 patients on a ventilator	Relative demand: confirmed and suspected % total patients	Relative demand: confirmed and suspected in ICU to licensed ICU beds	Relative demand: % ventilators in use confirmed and suspected	Relative demand: confirmed and suspected % total patients to STAFFED beds
Elko	75	75	13	17%	17%	7	0	0%	16	0	0%	3	0	0	0	23%	0%	0%	4%

Ten active cases are currently hospitalized:

- 5 at Northeastern Nevada Regional Hospital (Elko)
- 4 at the University of Utah
- 1 at Saint Mary's

PPE, and medication levels are adequate as reported to NHA. NNRH is sanitizing PPE, including N95 masks in effort to ensure PPE levels remain stable. In addition, they continue to purchase and stockpile PPE to prepare for a surge.

NNRH has several staff, both medical and administrative, that are self-isolating related to COVID-19 – both with positive tests results and close contact exposures, not necessarily related to exposure in the workplace or in the healthcare setting. As community spread increases, our essential workforce, including healthcare workers and first responders are impacted. When healthcare workers are out of work, it not only affects the response to COVID-19, but also prevents other necessary medical treatments from occurring.

Describe the status of Alternative Care Facility planning, staffing, and implementation.

NNRH can expand capacity within their own facility, including obtaining additional ventilators, if necessary. However, full implementation of NNRH's Surge Plan, even if only expanding within the currently facility, will require additional staff.

Describe your current assessment of overall hospital capacity and metrics that will determine expansion to Alternative Care Facilities.

Elko County has worked with NNRH to ensure appropriate metrics have been identified which determine the implementation of the Surge Plan. The "triggers" which require implementation of the plan are based mostly on staffing needs, which are situational and dynamic. NNRH has sister facilities from which they may be able to utilize staff. In addition, NNRH works with contract staffing agencies to fulfill staffing requirements, when needed, and are prepared to do so.

Overall, Elko County's hospital capacity is good and remains stable. The capacity at transfer facilities is being closely monitored and could become a challenge in the event we are not able to transfer patients to a higher level of care, if needed.

The Task Force should also note, the town of Jackpot is located on the Nevada-Idaho border and the City of West Wendover is located on the Nevada-Utah border. Both communities have access to an acute care clinic operated by Nevada Health Centers; however, most residents seek medical care outside of the State, especially when advanced care, such as hospitalization is required. We are not being notified when a Jackpot resident seeks care in Idaho and tests positive, which is extremely problematic in reducing the exposures to others in the community.

ACCESS TO PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

Describe the status of PPE within the county, including:

The Elko County Logistics Team continues to support the regional warehouse which was established to provide supplies to Humboldt, Lander, Eureka, White Pine, and Elko counties as well as State and tribal agencies in northeastern Nevada. The Nevada National Guard trained

the Logistics team members to utilize their database, Inflo.

Describe the status of PPE on hand (in local reserve) and on order.

Nevada is stable with a 30-day supply on-hand with vendors being identified to maintain continuity of operations. In addition, Dr. Birx advised, there is plenty of PPE in the national stockpile, including access to ventilators, if necessary.

The current PPE status for health care providers and our public health system, including private practices, is at sufficient capacity for maintaining the status quo. As PPE has become more readily available through the normal supply chain, we have received fewer requests for assistance. However, the logistics team continues to work with existing suppliers and to identify new suppliers to plan for and build supplies necessary to respond to a surge or resurgence of COVID-19. In addition to the regional warehouse, Elko County EOC maintains a local warehouse in effort to respond to immediate, short-term needs.

We're encouraging providers to utilize the Battelle system for N-95 masks, although NNRH is using an in-house sanitizing process for their own PPE.

Through the use of CARES Act funding, Elko County and the incorporated cities have an appropriate amount of PPE to support the continuity of local government and municipal operations for at least 30 days, including the continuance of criminal jury trials.

Describe the county's distribution priorities.

PPE is distributed based on the priorities set by Nevada Division of Emergency Management, specifically hospitals, acute care facilities, private practices and correctional facilities, first responders and those supporting vulnerable populations.

TESTING CAPACITY

Describe the status of your local testing efforts, including:

Elko County continues to encourage anyone who would like to test to be tested.

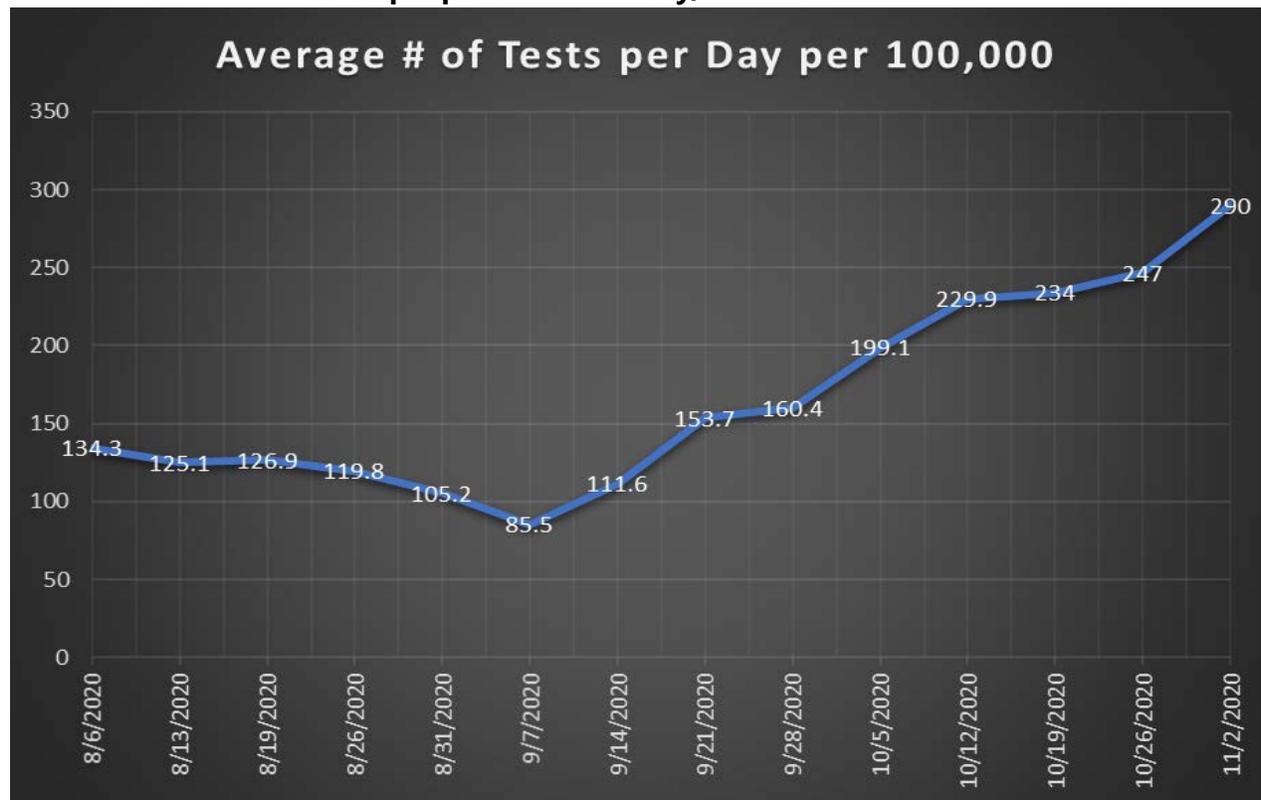
We are seeking alternatives and solutions to sending samples to the Nevada State Public Health Lab for processing. We consistently send approximately 700 samples to NSPHL each week, including samples from the local skilled nursing facility and the Elko County jail – two of our most vulnerable populations. The current turnaround time is anywhere from 5 to 10 days for results. We still have not received some results of our last community-based testing event held on October 23, 2020. When we conducted community-based testing in West Wendover on October 21, 2020, we received 14 positive results from that event on October 28 which is not effective for mitigating the spread of the virus.

Description of testing criteria:

Under the direction of Elko County Health Officer, Dr. Putnam, the testing strategy continues to be driven by availability of local resources. The priority for testing is as follows:

- Individuals experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19
- Close contacts of a confirmed case
- High risk or vulnerable individuals
- Healthcare workers and first responders
- Individuals scheduled for medical procedures

Overview of the number of people tested in a day/week.



Efforts to Increase Testing

Dr. Birx made us aware that 920,000 Abbot BinaxNOW rapid test kits were shipped to the State several days ago. We understand that 10% or 92,000 tests have been set aside for rural communities. Elko County encourages the Task Force, DEM, and DPBH to consider providing a larger allocation to the rural areas who do not have readily available access to instant tests, like in the urban areas, as this is critical to our mitigation efforts.

We made a resource request through DEM for 10,000 of these tests, only to be met with resistance related to CLIA certification. We understand that while the test is not perfect and can be used for diagnostic test purposes, we would prefer to use it as a screening tool. It would at least allow us to be able to identify cases earlier and get them isolated pending a confirmatory test especially given that we are seeing individuals with mild symptoms or no symptoms at all.

We believe the PREP Act may allow us to use the test for screening purposes without requiring CLIA certification. The FDA issued a statement on screening testing on August 24, 2020 (updated September 2, 2020) that clearly states that if healthcare providers are using SARS-CoV-2 diagnostic tests for screening asymptomatic individuals, and highly sensitive tests are not feasible, or if turnaround times are prolonged, healthcare providers may consider the use of a less sensitive POC test, even if they are not specifically authorized for this indication (commonly referred to as “off label use”).

In addition, we have initiated conversations with UMC who offers a turnaround time of 12 to 15 hours from receipt of the sample. Transportation of the samples from Elko to Las Vegas is a logistical challenge which we are also in the process of working through.

We have also had recent conversations with multiple State partners about utilizing the agricultural lab here in Elko for public health testing. We have another meeting on Friday, November 6 to continue the discussion to see if it is feasible and what is required to move forward. However, this is not a short-term solution.

Effective September 21, 2020, Medallus Urgent Care has agreed to test any individual who would like to have a COVID-19 test for any reason. The provider offers services seven days a week, which allows for flexibility to support vulnerable populations and first responders, if necessary. CARES Act funding received by Elko County will be utilized to support this initiative.

Overview of targeted testing efforts for high-risk communities, outbreak intervention and other efforts.

The Abbot BinaxNOW would be a tremendous help in protecting our high-risk communities, outbreak intervention, and other efforts.

We are in the process of obtaining additional AbbottID NOW machines to place with local health care providers.

Schools

The Elko County School District (ECSD) is the third largest in the state with 21 sites and approximately 10,000 students, 868 full-time staff, 224 part-time staff and 263 substitute teachers.

School District Staff: They have developed training modules for staff regarding Coronavirus awareness, cleaning and disinfecting your workplace and managing stress and anxiety. There is an administrator/supervisor quick reference guide for actions to take with their building when a student/employee has symptoms, exposure, or a positive test. They have also established a quick reference guide for students. This includes a description of coronavirus, how it is spread, how to protect themselves and their family what to watch for regarding symptoms, when to seek medical attention and returning to school criteria. The guide is comprehensive and includes picture algorithms.

In collaboration with the Nevada TIES program, Renown, and the Nevada National Guard, we offered nearly two weeks of voluntary testing to all faculty of the Elko County School District.

Again, this is a setting where the Abbott BinaxNOW test kits could be used regularly as a screening tool to prevent the spread of the virus within the schools by identifying asymptomatic individuals which can be isolated until a confirmatory result is received.

Skilled Nursing Facility Outbreak

Skilled nursing facilities are regulated by the State of Nevada, HCQC.

During mid-August, an outbreak was identified in the skilled nursing facility. A total of 62 individuals have tested positive, including 29 residents, 1 assisted living resident, and 32 staff. To date, there has been eight fatalities related to this outbreak, which accounts for 57% of the County's deaths. The last positive resident tested on October 23, 2020, but results were not received until November 2, 2020 – 10 days later. The last staff member who tested positive, tested on October 26, 2020. With inadequate test result timeframes, there may be an increase in cases in the skilled nursing facility unless we are able to contract with another laboratory which can provide quicker turnaround times.

Pursuant to CMS guidance, the skilled nursing facility is required to test staff and residents who have tested negative twice a week for at least the next 90 days. Elko County, through support of the Nevada State Public Health Lab, will continue to provide test kits to allow for regular, weekly testing of staff and residents until the outbreak is under control or longer required by the regulatory agency(ies). Nevada Health Centers will conduct rapid testing as capacity allows.

We also continue to closely monitor the City of West Wendover and keep in close contact with local health care providers. West Wendover is particularly challenging because on the other side of the Nevada border is Wendover, UT and Nevada and Utah have separate jurisdiction over the city within their respective state. Many of the Wendover, UT residents work in the gaming industry in Nevada. If there was an outbreak in the Wendover, UT community, NV DPBH may not be notified. As it is, reporting of results from Utah Department of Health to NV DPBH for West Wendover residents who test in Utah is generally delayed. It is not uncommon for results to be delayed, significantly limiting our ability to effectively complete the disease investigation and appropriately contact trace each case.

Jackpot is also being closely monitored as the Idaho Department of Health is not transferring the cases to Nevada in a timely manner, if at all. We are generally notified of positive residents by their employer and we follow-up with the individual to obtain the lab and complete the contact tracing process.

Elko County Jail Outbreak

Nearly a month ago, we were notified that a Detention Deputy tested positive for COVID-19. As a result, the internal contact tracing process was implemented to identify close contacts and exposures. As of November 3, 2020, there have been 47 inmates, 4 staff members, and 1 contracted medical staff who have tested positive. Both staff and inmates have been isolated and continue to be monitored to prevent community spread. All but five cases have been

recovered and the other active cases are expected to recover in the next few days. At this time, mostly mild symptoms have been reported, many cases have been asymptomatic. Inmates and staff are being tested on a weekly schedule. The contracted medical staff is monitoring/assessing positive cases each day and reporting to the contact tracing team. In the event an inmate experiences increased symptoms or complications, a process is in place to ensure they are transferred to a higher level of care. No cases have been transferred to a higher level of care as of today.

CASE INVESTIGATION AND CONTACT TRACING

Describe the current status of your contact tracing efforts, including:

Informal case investigation and contact tracing was implemented by Dr. Putnam early in Elko County's response to COVID-19, partially through the COVID-19 hotline. Positive cases and close contacts were instructed to self-isolate and were closely monitored until recovered.

Contact tracing has evolved to a highly competent team led by Dr. Amber Donnelly, Dean of Health Sciences and Human Services at Great Basin College. She developed a model which has been implemented across the State.

Case investigation and contact tracing has proven to be one of the County's best defenses and most effective strategies against spreading the virus in our communities. Twenty percent of the County's confirmed cases have been identified through familial relationships and contact tracing. Positive cases continue to be instructed to self-isolate and are monitored regularly by the contact tracing team. In addition, Elko County has provided communication about the new contact tracing app, COVID Trace.

Description of your current contact tracing workforce.

Elko County partners with Great Basin College to provide disease investigation and contact tracing services for Elko, Eureka, and Lander counties. The team is led by Dr. Amber Donnelly, Dean of Health Sciences and Human Services and is adequately staffed to meet our needs. A significant number of cases have been identified through contact tracing efforts.

Percent of positive cases contacted within 24 hours, and percent of cases contacted within 48 hours.

Upon notification of a positive result through the NBS system, the disease investigator begins collecting and validating contact information. Many laboratory results are reported without information necessary to begin the case investigation. When data is missing, the ordering facility is contacted for each case to gather the necessary information. Currently, the team is contacting all positive cases within 24 hours as long as they have accurate contact information for the case. Cases are instructed to self-isolate and are monitored regularly. They are also contacting all close contacts within 48 hours so long as they have accurate contact information.

Please note cases have been "lost" in NBS which also negatively impacts our ability to complete the disease investigation and contact tracing in a timely manner.

Overview contact tracing findings suggesting high-risk areas.

Skilled Nursing Facility Outbreak

In August, an outbreak was identified in the skilled nursing facility. A total of 62 individuals have tested positive, including 32 residents and 30 staff. The State Epidemiologist's team initiated an investigation to determine the source of the outbreak and an inspection by the HCQC team was completed the week of August 31 to ensure the appropriate infection control process was being followed, etc.

Ultimately, the State is the regulatory authority and is accountable to provide support and mitigate the spread of the virus in this facility.

Elko County will provide test kits to allow for regular, weekly testing of staff and residents until the outbreak is under control. Nevada Health Centers will conduct rapid testing as capacity allows.

Again, disease investigation and contact tracing efforts are adversely impacted if tests are not resulted in a timely manner which directly affects our ability to protect our vulnerable populations.

Workplace Exposures

We are monitoring clusters of cases related to workplace exposures. A majority of our new cases are not related to workplace exposures, but community spread and private, family/social gatherings.

Tribal Data

Currently, tribal cases make up 7% of our active cases. Elko County has separated tribal data from the rest of the county data to ensure local practices are consistent with those across the State. Separating tribal data from the County data is important because Elko County does not have the ability to require implementation of mitigation measures by tribes. Although, it is important to note, the tribes in Elko County have been very diligent about tracking their cases and ensuring their cases have any support needed.

Other Information

In addition to COVID-19 screening, the City of Elko has implemented testing of sewage and septage samples. The sewer system serves nearly 25,000 residents and also accepts septage from outside septic systems. Reports are consistent with new cases being reported.

PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

Describe your county's plans for addressing outbreaks within vulnerable populations, including:

Overview of efforts and interventions in skilled nursing facilities.

As previously mentioned, the skilled nursing facility in Elko is currently experiencing an outbreak amongst staff and residents. This facility is under the authority of the State.

Overview of efforts and interventions in correctional facilities.

Elko County Jail and the Juvenile Detention Center are the only correctional facilities which fall under the jurisdiction of the County.

- Inmates are brought in by patrol from any one of several agencies. Generally, arrestees are masked before being placed in the patrol vehicle, if possible. When the arrestee arrives at the facility, a jail deputy or contracted medical staff goes over the COVID-19 questionnaire. The arrestee's temperature is taken and depending on the arrestee's answers to the questions, they're cleared to be booked into the facility or sent to NNRH for further medical evaluation. Inmates who are clear for booking without symptoms are placed in isolation for at least 72 hours.
- If the inmate does not have a mask when booked, one is provided to them.
- Cleaning of the cells is completed at least twice a day to allow for the cells to be disinfected.
- Hand sanitizer and mask are provided to all employees.
- Employees are required to stay home if they're sick.

An outbreak has been identified in the Elko County Detention Facility. A total of 47 inmates, 4 staff, and 1 contracted medical staff has tested positive. Positive cases have been isolated away from the rest of the facility and regular assessment and testing is occurring to immediately identify and isolate any new potential positive case.

Elko County continues to work closely with Nevada Youth Training Center (NYTC) to ensure they are supported from all aspects, including adequate PPE supplies. At least one staff member of NYTC has tested positive; however, NYTC falls under the jurisdiction of the State.

ACTION PLAN

Elko County establishments have been found to be 90% compliant during OSHA inspections according to the last report we received. Because the virus is spreading through community spread and family/social gatherings, additional enforcement actions in the business sector or workplace is not likely to have a significant impact on slowing the spread of the virus.

Elko County strongly believes that lockdown policies have a devastating effect on short-term and long-term public health and cannot support another lockdown or stay at home order. Individuals are not attending preventive health screenings and appointments, childhood vaccination rates are lower than normal, and cardiovascular disease outcomes are worsening – not to mention the negative impact on mental health. We will continue to encourage outdoor activities as much as possible.

Elko County's plan includes a specific focus on two actions:

- Adequate testing with an acceptable turnaround time.
- Increased mask wearing in personal/private settings, encouraged by local leaders in the community through various means of communications including social media, radio, and other visual presentations (billboards, etc.), which will be supported by CARES Act funding.

Best said by Task Force Director, Caleb Cage, "Now that I have experienced this virus myself, I am even more convinced of how important our statewide testing capacity is".

Elko County continues to evaluate options for testing which will provide acceptable turnaround times to support the critical disease investigation and contact tracing process to mitigate the spread of the virus within our communities. On November 3, 2020, we requested 10,000 Abbott BinaxNOW test kits through DEM via a resource request. This was a solution specifically recommended by Dr. Birx given our challenges of not having access to testing with an acceptable turnaround time and our rural setting. So far, we have been met with many hurdles. The question we should all be asking is, "How can we...?". There must be a balance between risk management and disease mitigation.

Increased mask wearing is an effort that requires the whole community in order to be successful in mitigating the spread of the virus. Ineffective, inconsistent communication and misinformation have made this effort particularly difficult especially in a community as independent as Elko County. However, through local leadership, we have committed to supporting this critical action.

We have reached out to or are in the process of reaching out to local media outlets, including our community college to assist in clear, consistent communication regarding the importance of wearing masks not only in public settings, but also in private settings with family and friends. We are engaging with local partners and health care providers to help us share the message. We are increasing communication to the Hispanic population as well. This effort is particularly important to prevent the overrunning of our critical healthcare resources to ensure they have the capacity to treat all patients and not be forced to crisis standards of care. CARES Act funding is being used to support this action item.

We are working with State and local partners to develop a strategy to roll-out of the vaccine to those identified in Tier 1. Due to lack of communication related to the development process of the vaccine, apprehensions regarding the safety and efficacy of the vaccine are high and participation amongst the Tier 1 group may be minimal.

COVID-19 fatigue is real, and it is impacting all levels of leadership, healthcare workers, first responders and the community at large.