

Departments of Health remind residents of travel advisory

Slow the spread of COVID-19 in New York state by preventing travel-based transmission of this disease

By the Erie County Department of Health and the Niagara County Department of Health

Governors in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut announced a travel advisory on June 25 that requires all individuals traveling from states with significant community transmission of COVID-19 to remain under quarantine for a period of 14 days. As of June 30, those states include Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Idaho, Louisiana, Mississippi, Nevada, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Utah.

The New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) has established exemptions for essential workers, but in general, people who are returning to Erie County from those listed states are required to remain under precautionary quarantine. Those requirements include:

- √ Separate quarters with separate bathroom facilities for each individual or family group. Access to a sink with soap and water, and paper towels is needed.

- √ The contact must have a way to self-quarantine from household members as soon as fever or other symptoms develop, in a separate room. There must be a door that separates it from the rest of the living area and has its own bathroom. Given that an exposed individual might become ill while sleeping, the exposed individual must sleep in a separate bedroom from household members.

- √ Cleaning supplies, e.g. household cleaning wipes, must be provided in any shared bathroom.

- √ If an individual sharing a bathroom becomes symptomatic, all others sharing the bathroom will be considered exposed persons until the symptomatic individual is appropriately evaluated and cleared.

- √ Food must be delivered to the individual's quarters.

- √ Quarters must have a supply of face masks for individuals to put on if they become symptomatic.

- √ Garbage must be bagged and left outside by the door of each of the quarters for routine pick up.

Special handling is not required.

- √ Individuals should self-monitor for fever and other symptoms of COVID-19 daily throughout the duration of the quarantine period.

Individuals or businesses with questions about this advisory should contact NYSDOH.

"If you are planning a trip, we are urging you to avoid travel to states or regions where there is a high prevalence of COVID-19," said Commissioner of Health Dr. Gale Burstein. "The number of reported Erie County COVID-19 cases is currently low. We must avoid importing new cases from outside of NYS, which can lead to COVID-19 community transmission and new outbreaks in Erie County."

She continued, "We have done so much to reduce the number of cases in our community these past months, and we need to keep at it. Travelers who return from a high-risk state can contact our COVID-19 information line at 858-2929 to report their travel as soon as they return and to schedule a free COVID-19 diagnostic test,

five-seven days past your last day in one of those states."

To file a report of an individual failing to adhere to the quarantine pursuant to the travel advisory, call 1-833-789-0470 or use the form on the ECDOH website (www.erie.gov/covid19/travel-form).

Per New York state, anyone who returns from a high-risk state from nonessential travel will not be eligible to receive paid sick leave benefits for their quarantine period.

"The community has done tremendous work helping to flatten the curve. As our infection rate has significantly reduced, we need those returning to Niagara County to follow public health guidelines and consider free diagnostic testing during their 14-day quarantine," Public Health Director Daniel J. Stapleton stressed.

His team said adherence to requirements help to contain the rate of COVID-19 transmission and protect vulnerable populations from serious illness.

"Anyone currently in quaran-

tine should get tested for COVID-19," Stapleton emphasized.

A free county testing site is open every Wednesday with appointments starting as early as 9:30 a.m. To register, call 278-1900. Testing is free, does not require a doctor's order, and results are available in between two and four days. For more information, visit: <https://www.niagaracounty.com/health/Services/Public-Health-Preparedness/2019-Nov-el-Coronavirus-COVID-19>.

Additional Resources:

- √ New York State Department of Health, COVID-19 travel advisory: <https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/covid-19-travel-advisory>. Includes the current list of restricted states, information about travel and quarantine, and exemptions for essential workers.

- √ New York state governor's office executive order No. 205, quarantine restrictions on travelers arriving to New York: <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/no-205-quarantine-restrictions-travelers-arriving-new-york>.

Unemployment scam warning

Acting Niagara County Sheriff's Office Sheriff Michael J. Filicetti would like to notify residents about a newly reported scam using New Yorker's personal information to file fraudulent claims for unemployment benefits.

An advisory was issued by New York State Attorney General Letitia James outlining the reported scam. It stated, "Individuals who have been contacted by the New York State Department of Labor about unemployment benefits

they did not apply for must be aware of the possibility of identity theft."

"We must remain vigilant about potential scams and ensure residents remain alert," she said. "During these uncertain times, unemployment benefits are a safety net for many individuals and families who have lost their jobs. To exploit the use of these funds and overload a system that is already processing unprecedented numbers of claims per

day is as shameful as it is illegal. My office remains committed to holding accountable anyone who violates the law, and I continue to encourage the public to report suspected scams to my office."

Victims of unemployment benefits fraud should report any incidents to their employer and to the New York State Department of Labor unemployment insurance program. Victims can file a complaint online with the office of the attorney general at www.ag.ny.gov

or call 1-800-774-7755.

If one believes their identity has been compromised, they can file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission by visiting its website at www.IdentityTheft.gov. Continue to monitor credit reports for any unusual activity.

Filicetti also would like to remind residents of the following tips to protect themselves from these scams:

- √ Be suspicious of anyone who calls over the phone seeking

money or personal information. If someone owes money, they will receive a legitimate notice in writing that identifies the agency and the reason they owe money.

- √ Do not give out personal or sensitive information, including Social Security number or bank account information, to individuals over the phone. In addition, try to independently verify the authenticity of the caller.

American Red Cross blood drive July 9 at YVFC

New York State Sen. Robert Ortt, Assemblyman Mike Norris and Porter Supervisor John "Duffy" Johnston have joined together to invite the community to an American Red Cross "Communities that Care" blood collection. The blood drive will be held from noon to 6 p.m. Thursday, July 9, at the Youngstown Volunteer Fire Co. firehall, 625 Third St.

"Because of the current COVID-19 pandemic, many surgeries and patient treatments were temporarily paused," Ortt said. "As these procedures resume, there is an urgent need for blood donation appointments in the weeks ahead to prevent a shortage."

"On July 9, I am cohosting a blood drive with the American Red Cross at the Youngstown Volunteer Fire Co.," Norris said. "Every donation will be tested for COVID-19 and antibodies, and every donor will receive a free American flag as well as an American Red Cross T-shirt."

"We are encouraging people to make appointments to give," said Katie Potter, communications manager for the Red Cross of Western New York.

To make an appointment, visit www.redcrossblood.org and provide the sponsor code: YoungstownCTC, or call 1-800-RED-CROSS (1-800-733-2767). ID is required.

Water group (cont.)

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connection to the town water system on Ridge Road just outside the village. A water meter and pressure-reducing valve would be installed and the line would be extended into the village along the south side of Center Street to an existing 12-inch water line at Ninth and Center.

As far as the miles of old underground water pipes, Marino and the engineering firm Nussbaumer & Clarke have begun a study to update the current water

maps and develop a water needs and flow model to begin the process of replacing the aging pipes. Water mains under 8 inches are no longer allowed and newer materials will allow the pressures to be increased and provide larger volume of water.

The village is looking for a grant to help with the financing for this necessary project, but is also considering reinstating a quarterly charge on village water bills to begin building an account for the project. The

monies collected will be put into a "restricted" fund so that it will only be able to be used for infrastructure improvements. The existing infrastructure problems in the village are the same in other cities and villages across the country.

The Village of Lewiston's goal is to make sure all village residents have an abundant supply of clean, drinkable water with sufficient water pressure for all their needs, and water for fire control is adequate.

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Old Fort Niagara's complete safety plan is detailed at www.oldfortniagara.org/visitor-information.

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