



ROAD TO RECOVERY: Moving to a New Normal



Nye County Jurisdictional Assessment and Action Plan

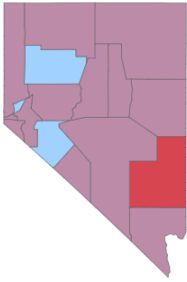
November 18, 2020

Overall Assessment:

Similar to state, national, and international trends, Nye County has seen a spike in overall COVID cases over the last few weeks and is currently flagged as a county for elevated disease transmission under two of the three State criteria.

County Tracker: Nevada's counties are diverse in so many ways and have been impacted by COVID-19 differently. In order to ensure that each county is assessed for elevated disease transmission this tracker will be updated daily. Monday snapshots are used for discussion in COVID-19 Mitigation and Management Task Force meetings. **A county is flagged for elevated disease transmission if it meets two of the three criteria:**

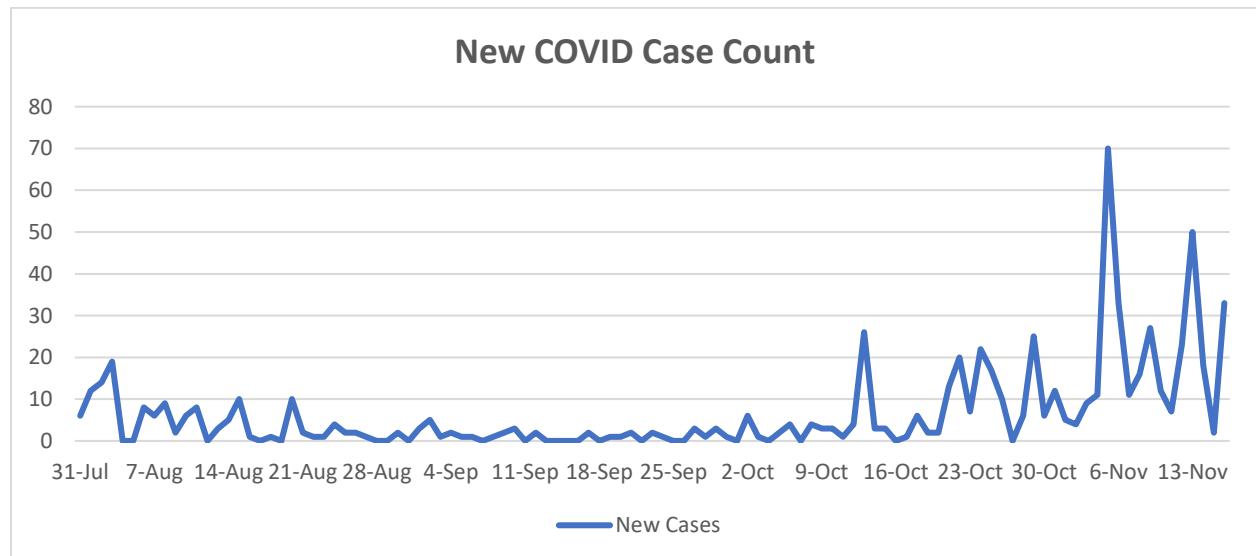
- 1. Average number of tests per day (per 100,000) < 100.** The average number of molecular tests conducted in the most recent complete two week period in a county, divided by the number of people living in the county. This number is then multiplied by 100,000 to control for varying populations in counties. Due to reporting delay, this is reported over a 14-day period with a 7-day lag. Counties that average fewer than 100 tests per day will meet this criterion.
- 2. Cases (per 100,000) > 200.** The total number of cases diagnosed and reported over a 30-day period divided by the number of people living in the county. This number is then multiplied by 100,000 to control for varying populations in counties. Counties with a case rate greater than 200 per 100,000 will meet this criterion.
- 3. Cases (per 100,000) > 50 AND testing positivity > 8.0%.** The total number of positive molecular tests divided by the total number of molecular tests conducted. This number is then multiplied by 100 to get a percentage. Due to reporting delay (which may be different between positive and negative tests), this is reported over a 14-day period with a 7-day lag. Counties with a test positivity > 8.0% paired with case rate greater than 50 per 100,000 will meet this criterion.



Map shading is based on the number of criteria met. Hover your cursor over a county to display more data.

County	Average Number of Tests per Day per 100,000 (14-day average with 7-day lag)	Cases per 100,000 (last 30 days)	Test Positivity (14-day with 7-day lag)
Carson City	631	2,161	20.8%
Churchill	585	1,515	15.0%
Clark	315	905	13.9%
Douglas	161	471	13.6%
Elko	269	1,160	19.3%
Esmeralda	103	719	14.3%
Eureka	113	254	16.1%
Humboldt	127	463	13.2%
Lander	284	650	13.9%
Lincoln	32	385	39.1%
Lyon	188	736	20.0%
Mineral	611	658	5.6%
Nye	120	579	22.4%
Pershing	619	345	3.5%
Storey	46	45	6.9%
Washoe	374	1,485	17.3%
White Pine	533	973	9.5%

As shown below, our spike began on October 13 and has been trending upward ever since. We had a large influx of cases on November 5 and it is too early to tell if we are trending downward from there or continuing to rise.



Through ongoing contact tracing, we have identified that the spike is attributable to the following:

- *The Tonopah Test Range (“TTR”)* - We have seen an uptick in COVID cases at the TTR which is a restricted military installation near Tonopah. Because of the classified nature of the facility, it is difficult to thoroughly discuss and implement COVID mitigation measures but our DEM Director Scott Lewis has been in close contact with the site’s contractors and vendors to discuss corrective actions. TTR site reps have agreed to retrain staff on distancing and face coverings, remove bussing services for employees, enforce quarantine models for employees, address air exchange within the facility, and move more testing activities outdoors whenever possible.
- *Nye County School District* - When applicable, teachers and students have been traced and quarantined, classes have been closed for deep cleaning, after school programs closed for a second time, and Pahump Valley High School was recently closed for two weeks and is now accessible for virtual learning only. Other schools have voluntarily closed respective grades and classes to ensure the safety of students and staff. The School District has been receptive to our suggestions and responsive to each outbreak with good communication.
- *Religious institutions* – Two separate churches contributed to our recent spike. One has closed its doors and canceled in-person services until further notice. The other has canceled the bible and study groups where the outbreak occurred. The participants in those groups have voluntarily quarantined themselves and the church has added additional COVID prevention and mitigation measures at its services.
- *Nevada Southern Detention Center (“NSDC”)* – NSDC has had several outbreaks at various times during the pandemic including one that has occurred over the last few weeks. This is attributable to the transient and close-contact nature of transporting and detaining federal detainees. The detainees come from all over the western United States and sometimes other states or countries where COVID restrictions are absent or enforced less stringently. NSDC guards and staff come in close proximity with the detainees and unfortunately therefore have higher rates of exposure. Because the facility is federal property, we have questioned our jurisdiction over it and have sought guidance and assistance from the state and CDC.
- *Family gatherings* - Funerals, birthdays, holidays, visitations remain hotspots for disease transmission. Most appear to let their guard down with masks when associating with people they are comfortable with. This is especially true in the home. Many citizens are experiencing COVID fatigue and while they may be compliant with mitigation measures at work, most tend to abandon caution within their own home. Prior reports have highlighted the difficulty and understandable reluctance of local officials to police people in their private residences.
- *Never Give-up* – Never Give Up Youth Healing Center is an outpatient and residential youth center which has recently experienced an outbreak in COVID cases. The facility is

currently on watch with Nye County and State investigators and is communicating with both.

Bars, pubs, taverns, breweries, distilleries, and wineries (“liquor establishments”) in rural areas of Nye County have been reopened for almost three months with no showing of cases attributable to these establishments.

Nye County remains in the red for average tests completed but there are two probable reasons for this:

Reliance on Deep Nasal Pharyngeal Tests

Although the county has had opportunities to conduct mass testing using the popular self-administered shallow swab test, we have opted against this common practice. As indicated during a prior Task Force meeting, Nye County has seen several instances of false negatives obtained after a shallow swab from patients who had initially and subsequently tested positive using the deep nasal-pharyngeal test. This was a difficult public health decision to make since our residents are: 1) eager to reopen; and 2) desirous to utilize the more comfortable and less invasive testing method. Rather than “cooking the books” by utilizing the unreliable shallow test to increase our testing numbers, the county has opted to continue using the deep nasal-pharyngeal test to avoid promoting a false sense of security that comes with a false negative test. The Nye County Sheriff’s Office issued a [video press release](#) informing the public of this policy.

However, Nye County was recently contacted by her state legislators who are trying to secure newer, high-reliability, rapid response tests that provide results within ten minutes. These tests are being touted as 97% reliable. We have been informed that the state has obtained approximately nine-hundred thousand tests and our representatives are trying to secure ten thousand for Nye County and neighboring smaller counties.

Nye County Residents testing in Clark County

Because of our proximity to Clark County, many Nye County residents work in Las Vegas and/or decide to test in Las Vegas. Clark County becomes a more appealing venue for testing for residents who seek privacy and confidentiality outside of the relatively small town of Pahrump. Also, Clark County utilizes the more user-friendly shallow swab test which makes testing in Nye County less enticing in comparison. Working closely with the State, we have a much better understanding who of our residents are testing in Clark County through weekly reports.

Critical Statewide Metrics:

Hospital Capacity:

- Desert View is reporting a 90-95% capacity with most patients COVID positive or “Under a COVID Rule-Out Status”. Much of the ER staff have become COVID positive; however, most of the affected staff reside in Las Vegas. Those that reside in Nye are under “INVESTIGATION and TRACING” status with DEM.
- The hospital is equipped with ventilators; however, none are in use by COVID patients.

- Desert View reports staffing models that are adequate for provided services and they continue to assess their staff daily before entering the facility. They have further limited access of non-patients into the hospital.
- Medications and treatments remain unremarkable with most patients released to self-quarantine at home.
- Desert View reports that PPE supplies are adequate and without issue.

Access to Personal Protective Equipment:

- Nye County Department of Emergency Management continues to manage a sufficient supply of PPE with prioritization to emergency responders, medical providers, testing facilities, long-term, skilled and assisted living facilities, government operations, and target hot spots.
- Nye County Emergency Management has completed training EMTs throughout the County to assist with potential COVID-19 vaccinations. We are also early ordering supplies in support of this mission.

Testing Capacity:

- Nye County continues to lead in the rural counties with over 8,000 tests completed. The completed test reference does not include Nye County residents who have tested outside of Nye County.
- To help ensure accuracy of our testing results, Nye County conducts only deep nasal-pharyngeal tests with appropriate recommended swab kits as detailed above. Nye County is hopeful that the new rapid response tests will be received and as reliable as purported.
- Our testing continues through private vendors by both appointment and a regularly scheduled drive-thru center located in Pahrump. Additional testing is completed at the hospital, medical clinics, and doctor's offices.
- Nye County Department of Emergency Management regularly receives and distributes State supplied nasal-pharyngeal testing kits to the testing centers upon request.

Case Investigation and Contact Tracing:

- Nye County believes that mitigation is essential to our success in managing COVID-19 spread and potential outbreaks. Therefore, Nye County will continue to enforce the baseline restrictions and mitigation efforts as directed through various state directives.
- Referencing our continued upward trajectory and review of the continuing successful OSHA compliance data reinforces the fact that Nye County has exceeded many of the existing statewide restrictions and requirements by policing the use of masks, physical distancing, and reduced facility capacity. However, we shall further implement additional county modifications to address future "specific sources" of infection that we may encounter.
 - *Public/Private Partnership:* Prior to the re-closure, Nye County and Pahrump had been recognized as a leader in COVID-19 spread mitigation through OSHA and County conducted inspections of various community businesses.
 - Through a cooperative partnership with our business community, Nye County established a self-assessment and commit plan following predictive COVID-19 best practices. This

partnership shall be accompanied by a public education outreach campaign spearheaded by our business leaders, our Public Information Officer, and enforcement agencies.

- *Reporting requirements:* Although recent OSHA evaluations have identified high compliance within Nye County and Pahrump, we will not rest on our laurels and will adopt a self-reporting requirement that is reinforced through our enhanced enforcement effort that is outlined within. This shall require public and private groups to report known and confirmed cases that have originated in their business to Nye County Department of Emergency Management. Undisclosed cases or intentional disregard of compliance would automatically result in closure of the business until remediation or compliance could be ensured. We believe that this requirement best positions Nye County to avoid COVID-19 spikes due to non-compliance of existing restrictions.
- Like most other Nevada Counties, Nye County's investigation and tracing is strained; however, we have engaged additional internal investigation and tracing resources, but the on-going steep increase in case load remains challenging.

Protection of Vulnerable Populations:

- Nye County continues to monitor and support the Nye County Sheriff's Office Jail, long-term, skilled nursing and assisted living facilities, and other vulnerable populations located throughout the County. This is completed by providing testing kits, PPE, and other associated prevention resource materials.

Enforcement:

County Level Information (Nye County has no incorporated cities within its boundaries so only county data is available)

- Overview of county agencies involved in enforcement - Nye County continues to embrace a joint communication and enforcement model which includes the Nye County Sheriff's Office, Nye County Emergency Services, Nye County Code Compliance, the Nye County District Attorney's Office, Nye County Public Information Office, Nye County Workplace Safety & Training Officer, and Nevada OSHA.
- Overview of the number of observations conducted by county enforcement officials – Nye County refers most alleged violations and concerns to Nevada State OSHA. Nye County established a dedicated COVID Hotline (775-751-6311) for residents to report their concerns. Since August 14, 2020, we have received approximately 27 calls which have all been referred to Nevada State OSHA. Businesses which have been reported include bars, fitness centers, RV parks, grocery stores, firearms facilities and department stores.

In addition to referring cases to OSHA, County officials also respond to calls themselves. Nye County has responded to or observed approximately 18 businesses. These include bars, restaurants, department stores, grocery stores, schools, and horse racing facilities. County officials have also intervened or investigated advertised events. Nye County officials have also responded to alleged violations within county government by working directly with Nevada State OSHA to address allegations that public officials and employees were not complying with the Governor's Directives.

- Overview of compliance rates during county observations – Of the cases observed by or reported to Nye County officials, we have seen an approximately 90% compliance rate. Most businesses in Nye County are willing to comply with the Governor’s Directives to avoid being closed, fined, or contributing to the pandemic. One notable exception was a political event held at a private business a few weeks ago. The business owner was fined by OSHA, the county is unaware if the fine was paid.
- Overview of the number of violations and enforcement actions taken by county officials – Because compliance rates have been so high, the County has had to take very few enforcement actions. In all instances, a simple warning was sufficient to rectify any non-compliance. No fines have been issued, no businesses have been closed, nor has it been necessary to do either.

Nye County government has implemented the governor’s Stay at Home 2.0 request by requiring county offices to telecommute, close to the public, or limit operations where feasible. Additionally, Nye County is vetting the following planning tool for use in determining whether an event should be approved, with or without conditions, or if county offices should be closed:

Parameter	Not trending toward surveillance capacity	Trending toward surveillance capacity	Exceeding trending surveillance capacity
7-day average of new cases	<20	20-30	>30
Test positivity rate 7-day	<5%	5%-7%	>8%
Case Investigation & contact capacity	>85% within 48 hrs	> 75%-80% within 48 hours	<75% within 48 hours
Hospital Capacity	<85%	86%-90%	>90%
Recommendation for gatherings/hybrid work/hybrid-closure schools			
Up to 250 attendees	No review necessary	Review Required	Denial
251-900 attendees	Recommend Approval	Recommend approval w/ warning of cancel	Denial
County Gov Offices	Normal Operations	Increase Established Measures	Closure/ Hybrid

Since the date of our last report on November 11, Nye County has had approximately 142 new positive COVID-19 cases with 22 total deaths.

Working with the State Epidemiologist office, Nye County has placed over 580 patients to recovered status with additional patients under review.

Conclusion:

Though we have seen a spike in positive cases over the last few weeks, Nye County remains optimistic that our added and ongoing mitigation efforts will be successful.

Submitted by:
Tim Sutton, Nye County Manager
tsutton@co.nye.nv.us