

Kawartha, Northumberland employers urged to take extra steps to combat covid case surge

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Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit issues letter outlining additional measures businesses can take to help halt any further spread of the virus during the holiday season





With a spike in local cases of COVID-19, the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit is encouraging employers to put measures in place to help prevent further spread of the virus.

The health unit sent letters to area employers on Friday (Dec. 17) asking them to take additional steps within their businesses in light of the fact the local region has logged 126 confirmed cases in the previous 14 days.

“I am worried that we are already seeing a surge of cases in advance of the holiday season” says HKPR medical officer of health Dr. Natalie Bocking. “Our goal is to

reduce the number of people working in close proximity to help halt any further spread. Broad measures are required as there is no one sector that is causing this sharp increase in local cases.”

The letter supplements a provincial announcement made earlier the same day regarding new capacity limits, including limiting indoor gatherings to 10 people from the previous 25, outdoor gathering limits lowered to 25 people from 100, and setting capacity limits at most indoor settings across province - including restaurants, bars, personal care services, retailers, shopping malls - at 50 per cent. This does not apply to a business or space that is used for such services as weddings, funerals and religious practices.

The provincial limits come into effect at 12:01 a.m. on Sunday (Dec. 19).

In her letter to employers, Dr. Bocking recommends all employers:

- Move all employees to work remotely, unless required to be on-site at the workplace.
- Limit all on-site interactions, conducting meetings virtually, when feasible to do so.

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- If staff must work on-site, employers should actively screen employees for COVID-19 symptoms and refer any employee that screens positive for testing, ensure workers are physically distanced by at least two metres when at their workstations or separated by physical barriers, wear tightly fitting masks if they cannot be physically distanced while working or when moving throughout the workplace, stagger lunches and breaks to maximize minimize interactions, and ensure lunchrooms and break areas are arranged and posted with a maximum occupancy to maintain physical distance between employees using the spaces while eating and drinking.

“While these measures will not stop an upcoming omicron surge, the goal is to interrupt and slow down transmission of the virus as much as possible,” Dr. Bocking says. “We need to work together to prevent severe illness from COVID and protect our health care system from further strain.”