



Businesses begin to reopen

Counties meet AZDHS benchmarks for business reopening

Arizona Department of Health Services (AZDHS) announced that Maricopa, Pima and six other counties have met state benchmarks to move into the “moderate” phase of reopening. This will allow some bars, gyms, movie theaters, water parks and tubing operators in these counties to reopen with significantly reduced capacity and social distancing measures in place. The "moderate" phase requires indoor gyms to reopen at 25% capacity, and bars and nightclubs (that serve food), movie theaters, water parks, and tube operators to reopen at 50% capacity.

Businesses in these counties must submit an attestation form and agree to follow the state's business reopening guidelines, which include mask requirements, increased cleaning and sanitization, encouraging social distancing, closing communal spaces and screening staff members for COVID-19-like symptoms. Businesses who do not comply with the required mitigation measures will be subjected to strict enforcement. AZDHS officials indicated that police, county health departments, and other state agencies will be responsible for enforcement. Businesses found to be in violation could be closed until violations are corrected.

If a person believes a business isn't following requirements, AZDHS has established a complaint process so local and state officials can follow up as needed. Complaint's can be submitted online by clicking [here](#) or by calling the COVID-19 Compliance Hotline at 1-844-410-2157

Below are the COVID-19 benchmark levels by county:

- **Apache**- Moderate
- **Cochise**- Moderate
- **Coconino**- Moderate
- **Gila**- Substantial
- **Graham**- Substantial
- **Greenlee**- Minimal
- **La Paz**- Moderate
- **Maricopa**- Moderate
- **Mohave**- Substantial
- **Navajo**- Moderate
- **Pima**- Moderate
- **Pinal**- Substantial
- **Santa Cruz**- Substantial
- **Yavapai**- Moderate
- **Yuma**- Substantial

Information on AZDHS guidelines for businesses can be found [here](#).

For information on how to submit an attestation form, click [here](#).

Latest on reopening schools

Arizona Department of Health Services (AZDHS) indicated that all 15 counties meet at least one of the three benchmarks for reopening schools set by the agency. Released earlier this month, the benchmarks for safely returning to in-person instruction are broken up into three data categories which include:

1. **The number of cases.** Schools can open in a limited capacity when their county's rate of new cases per 100,000 people falls below 100 per week for two weeks, or there is a two-week consecutive decline in cases.
2. **People testing positive.** Schools may open in a limited capacity when the percentage of people testing positive for COVID-19 in their county falls below 7%.
3. **Hospitalizations.** Schools may open on a limited basis when the percent of hospital visits caused by COVID-like illness falls below 10% for two consecutive weeks.

According to the agency, K-12 schools in Yavapai and Apache County have met all three benchmarks to reopen for partial in-person learning. The state's largest county, Maricopa, is close to meeting the recommended guidelines for in-person instruction; however, it will have to wait at least one more week to meet all three benchmarks. A dashboard available [here](#), indicates whether counties meet the recommended benchmarks for initial reopening of in-person learning in schools.

Unlike with businesses, these benchmarks are optional for schools. Governor Ducey has left it up to individual districts and schools to decide when to reopen safely.

To review Benchmarks for Safely Returning to In-Person Instruction, click [here](#).

To review School Benchmarks by County, click [here](#).

COVID-19 cases continue to trend downward

Arizona Department of Health Services (AZDHS) officials announced that statewide the number of new COVID-19 cases continues to trend downward. Last Wednesday, marked the 15th consecutive day that the number of new cases was less than 1,000, which the state had not experienced since June. The state saw an average increase of 3,075 new cases a day in July, and now it is averaging less than one-third of that amount in August — 930 new cases a day.

AZDHS figures show that 84% of inpatient beds and 79% of ICU beds were in use, which includes people being treated for COVID-19 and other patients. COVID-19 patients are using 10% of all inpatient beds and 16% of ICU beds. Overall, 30% of ventilators were in use. The state has one of the lowest COVID-19 rates of spread (Rt) in the nation at 0.84 (the average number of people a COVID-positive individual will infect). Of known test results from last week, AZDHS reported that 5% have come back positive. A positivity rate of 5% is considered a good indicator that the spread is being controlled.

For more information on free COVID-19 testing sites click [here](#).

AZDES issues more than \$10 billion in unemployment

Arizona Department of Economic Security (AZDES) announced that the agency has distributed more than \$10 billion in state Unemployment Insurance (UI), Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA), Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) and Lost Wages Assistance (LWA) since the week ending March 7th.

Last week, Arizona became the first state in the nation to begin issuing LWA. In partnership with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the \$44

billion LWA grant program allows states to provide unemployed persons \$300 per week in addition to the regular state unemployment benefit. In Arizona, over \$252 million in LWA has been issued to approximately 400,000 claimants during the program's first week, including retroactive payments for the weeks ending August 1st and August 8th.

The agency continues to face an unprecedented number of fraudulent unemployment claims. AZDES last week issued \$738 million to 90,000 claims determined eligible after review for potential fraud. However, 900,000 claimants remain under review. According to AZDES, 1,000 employees have been hired to clear unemployment claims by comparison, only 20 people worked in the unemployment claims department before the pandemic began.

For more information on unemployment assistance, click [here](#).

Arizona ranked high nationally for Women's Equality

In a new study conducted by *Wallethub*, Arizona ranked among the top 5 states nationally for Women's Equality. The study compared all 50 states across three key dimensions: Workplace Environment; Education & Health; and Political Empowerment. The state placed **8th** in Workplace Environment; **15th** in Education & Health; and **5th** in Political Empowerment. Arizona also ranked in the top five for the "Smallest Political Representation Gap" and "Smallest Work Hours Gap" subcategories.

Historically, Arizona has been a leader nationally for women's equality. The state's first Governor, George W.P. Hunt, was a strong advocate for women's suffrage. He once asked rhetorically "Why is taxation without representation tyranny for me and justice for women." Through his leadership, legislation was passed giving women the right to vote in 1912, nearly eight years before the passage of the 19th Amendment and only 9 months after Arizona became a state. Arizona also became the first state to elect women simultaneously to the five highest elected positions, in 1998. Known as the "Fab Five", this accomplishment still stands as the greatest number of women to serve in a state's highest elected offices at one time.

To read the study by *Wallethub*, click [here](#).



Arizona gets national attention for COVID-19 response



Arizona Update on Issues



Click here to find COVID-19 resources and volunteer opportunities

Click here to find the AGA 2020 primary analysis

Legislators' Birthdays



Happy Birthday
Rep. Walt Blackman (R)
Sunday, August 30th

Representing LD6, Representative Blackman is serving his first term at the Legislature. He is the first Black Republican elected in Arizona. Born in Portugal, Blackman was raised on a military base where his father was a pilot in the United States Air Force. Following his father, Blackman enlisted and served 21 years in the United States Army, earning a Bronze Star for combat action as a tank commander in Iraq. At the Legislature, he serves as Vice Chairman of the House Judiciary and State and International Affairs committees. This session his top legislative priority was HB2072 which would have implemented a three-year Arizona Mental Health Professionals Academy Pilot Program at Northern Arizona University to provide incentives for students to enter the mental health profession and commit to working as a mental health professional in Arizona public schools or in a correctional facility. To wish Representative Blackman happy birthday: wblackman@azleg.gov



Happy Birthday
Rep. Rosanna Gabaldón (D)
Wednesday, Sept. 9th

Representing LD2, Representative Gabaldón was first elected to the Legislature in 2013. Born in Bermuda, she is a past councilwoman of the Town of Sahuarita. Outside of the Legislature, Gabaldón serves in numerous facets within her community as a member of the Southeast Arizona Advisory Board of the Chicanos Por La Causa, Advisory Council of the Green Valley Salvation Army and Southeast Arizona Citizens Forum Board of the International Boundary Water Commission. At the Legislature, Gabaldón is a member of the House Transportation and Natural Resources committees. This session her top legislative priority was HB2076 which would have made a supplemental appropriation of \$6.1 million from the general fund to the Department of Water Resources to hire additional hydrologists, groundwater flow modelers and support staff members. To wish Representative Gabaldón happy birthday: rgabaldon@azleg.gov

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