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City of Duluth Communications Office

Mayor Emily Larson
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SUBJECT: Mayor Larson declares local state of emergency and implements face covering requirement

BY: Kate Van Daele, Public Information Officer

Mayor Larson declares local state of emergency and implements face covering requirement

[Duluth, MN] Mayor Emily Larson has declared a local state of emergency and face covering requirement that will take effect on Friday, January 14 at 5:00 p.m.

The local state of emergency is pursuant to Duluth City Code Section 17-7. The face covering requirement states that all persons ages five and up are required to wear a face covering in places of public accommodation. A public space of accommodation includes the indoor space of a business, or an educational, refreshment, entertainment or recreation facility, public transportation, or an institution of any kind, whether licensed or not, whose goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodations are extended, offered, sold, or otherwise made available to the public. This proclamation and declaration shall terminate February 12, 2022 at 5:00 pm.

“The City has spent the last two days rewriting this proclamation and declaration,” Mayor Emily Larson said. “I have spent time on the phone talking with Governor Walz and other state leaders to discuss our options and the state of COVID-19. Actions take time. This decision was the outcome of due diligence, and in the interest of keeping the public safe.”

Mayor Larson was joined by Dr. Nicholas Van Deelen, CEO of St. Luke's, Amy Westbrook, Director of Public Health at St. Louis County, and Dr. Kevin Casey, Chief Medical Officer at Essentia Health.

In a statement, Dr. Jon Pryor, president of Essentia Health's East Market said:

“We thank Mayor Larson for taking this very important step. This mandate will save lives. Masks slow the transmission of COVID-19 and therefore ease the strain on health care resources, which are stretched dangerously thin. Our employees, many of whom are physically and emotionally exhausted from working tirelessly throughout this pandemic, are grateful for the Mayor's announcement.”

“We all have a responsibility to follow public health recommendations to protect our community's health and to protect healthcare systems and long-term care facilities which continue to be extremely strained in this pandemic,” Amy Westbrook said. “St. Louis County shares in the concern that non-compliance with public health recommendations presents a grave risk to our care systems and community health.”

“Mayor Larson's mask mandate is desperately needed to protect the health of our community members,” Dr. Nicholas Van Deelen, St. Luke's Co-President/CEO &CMO, MD, said. “We all wish we could return to normal and do away with masks. This pandemic seems endless, but with these new mandates we will be able to better fight the new variants like omicron that keep popping up. In the end, it's only a small thing to do to help ensure the safety of our family, friends and neighbors.”

“As we move into the third year of being impacted by COVID-19, today's announcement is no different than when we first came together in March of 2020,” Mayor Larson said. “To avoid the spread of COVID-19 we ask the public to wear a mask, social distance, get vaccinated and get a booster to protect not only yourself but your loved ones and those around you.”

St. Louis County is providing vaccine booster clinic opportunities which can be found at the following link: www.stlouiscountymn.gov/vaccineregistration. Clinics are available at the American Indian Community Housing Organization today, January 13, from 1:00 - 4:00 p.m. and tomorrow, January 14 at the St. Louis County Government Services Center from noon to 3:00 p.m. Additional vaccine opportunities are available through area healthcare providers and pharmacies, or can be found through the state's website: www.mn.gov/covid19.

The City of Duluth is making a mask requirement sign available for any business or organization to use during the face covering regulation timeframe. The sign can be found by clicking on the following link: <https://duluthmn.gov/covid19/>.

Violations of the proclamation and declaration may result in a warning letter or a fine. For questions or more information, please visit: www.duluthmn.gov/covid19. The City of Duluth will be enforcing the face covering regulation. To make a face mask complaint, please email mask@duluthmn.gov.

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