
Subject: FW: We are heading towards another COVID shutdown

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Subject: We are heading towards another COVID shutdown

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As a UCLA physician, COVID-vaccine researcher and a Mammoth homeowner, I'm writing about my grave concerns from experience opening weekend at Mammoth Mountain.

It's with much joy to be back skiing during such a devastating year. I appreciate the efforts to establish ground rules to keep our community safe and functioning. However, it's very clear that people refuse to wear masks in the lift lines and throughout town, and even more have face coverings which are not appropriate to limit the spread of COVID-19.

The lift operators tried hard to ask people to put on their masks, to encourage people to protect the ski season but eventually gave up. People would put the mask on briefly, but would immediately take them back off. My estimate was only 50% of people had a proper face coverings in the lift lines. Many, many people also wore non-compliant face coverings per Mammoth Mountain's directives, including neck warmers that didn't cover their nose, coverings designed for wind with nose & mouth vents and other single layer materials.

Without proper & strict enforcement, particularly at the start of the season, this resort and the town of Mammoth Lakes are going to face a very quick end to this winter season with devastating financial and health costs. Already we know cases have entered employee housing and the virus is skyrocketing beyond previous records throughout the country.

Here's some suggestions:

1. There need to be true consequences for putting other's safety in jeopardy, after one warning, people need to lose their passes. This is no different than other life threatening safety violations.
2. Face coverings need to be worn at all times, throughout the resort. Signs as you enter town, parking lots, the resorts, the websites and apps need to be very clear about the requirements and the consequences. For example, the airlines have banned passengers, returned them to the departing airport and have had clear messaging about the responsibility to wear a mask without excuses.
3. The safety barriers at the bottom of runs should be clearly marked "ENTERING A MASK REQUIRED ZONE."
4. Requiring IKON or Mammoth branded face coverings or medical/surgical grade masks, would make it's clear that people are wearing compliant masks.
5. Employees should be incentivized to enforce the mask policies and both give warnings and deactivate passes, like what I've heard about when people use other people's passes.
6. Having people who's sole job is to enforce COVID rules is needed at all the lifts and lodges, similar to what the film industry is currently doing.
7. The town needs to fine people violating the public health mandates for face coverings. The town sent a clear message about not visiting during the first lockdown, we can make this clear again about what we expect of visitors to our community.

If we don't get this under control, not only lives will be lost, livelihoods will as well.

Mammoth Hospital's capacity for COVID care is limited and we may soon not have the luxury of transferring people to Nevada as they exceed capacity.

Mammoth Lakes collected only \$28,277 in transient occupancy tax (TOT) in April & May 2020 vs \$2.5+ million in 2019; similarly only \$89,656 in tourism business improvement district (TBID) vs \$880,614.

Once another, possibly full season shutdown happens, many business will fail, residents will be pushed further into poverty, and the town will face serious budget difficulties.

Bold, early action is needed to enforce the simple act of appropriately wearing a mask by the resort and the public officials in Mammoth Lakes & Mono County. Otherwise, a place that I love so much, is going to suffer greatly.

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Emery Chang is an Associate Professor at UCLA Health, who is a sub-investigator on COVID vaccine and treatment trials, and has significant interest in infectious diseases, preventative medicine and primary care. He has been a homeowner since 2014.