For Immediate Release

Alcohol sales to anyone without WV-issued ID banned in Mon County

MORGANTOWN, WV (April 4, 2020) — In order to enforce social distancing and to keep residents of other states — some of which have higher rates of COVID-19 than West Virginia — Monongalia County Health Department has issued a public health order to control the sales of liquor, including banning its sale to anyone without a West Virginia-issued driver’s license or state identification.

The changes took effect at noon Saturday, April 4, and will remain in effect until rescinded.

Dr. Lee B. Smith, MCHD executive director and county health officer, noted that just as the Eastern Panhandle gets traffic via Interstate 81, which runs through Berkeley County, Interstate 79 also provides an easy path for out-of-state residents to travel to Monongalia County.

Currently, the Eastern Panhandle is experiencing a cluster of COVID-19 cases in Berkeley and Jefferson counties, with 49 diagnosed cases in Berkeley and 17 in Jefferson as of Saturday morning.

“Our numbers are starting to increase exponentially, and we are on a similar trajectory as the Eastern Panhandle,” Dr. Smith said. “If you add up all the diagnosed cases from our region, we have 88.”

That includes 48 diagnosed cases in Monongalia County as of Saturday afternoon.

In addition to banning the sale of alcohol to anyone without a West Virginia driver’s license or official state ID, the order also makes these changes to the way liquor businesses operate:
Having only essential employees during working hours;
Maintaining a distance of 6 feet between customers and staff at all times, using floor markings or tape at cash registers or other places where people congregate;
Limiting individuals to no more than 10 people, including staff and clientele, during store hours or when open for business;
Providing adequate hand-washing stations, especially at places where paper or other items are exchanged between staff and clientele;
Surfaces must be frequently wiped down with a 10% bleach solution or similar Centers for Disease Control and Prevention-approved cleaner anywhere any individual’s hands may reach, including telephones, keyboards, light switches, doorknobs, handrails, etc.
Placing an employee outside the premises where spirits and hard liquors are sold to ensure that only those citizens with a valid West Virginia driver’s license or West Virginia state-issued identification card be allowed to enter a shop and purchase alcohol.

The order was issued in conjunction with the following agencies: Monongalia County Commission, Monongalia County Emergency Management, Monongalia County Prosecuting Attorney’s Office, Monongalia County Sheriff, Morgantown City Police, Granville Police, Star City Police, Westover Police, West Virginia University Police and West Virginia State Police.

Dr. Smith noted that West Virginia Code 16-2-11(a)(10) gives local Boards of Health the authorization to enforce public health laws of the state; and that West Virginia Code 16-2-13 requires the county health officer to take an oath of office and that county health officers are required to administer laws of this state.

The order also notes that Gov. Jim Justice issued a stay-at-home order on March 24 other than to attend to essential business; and that both the CDC and the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources has recommended the public practice of social distancing by staying at least 6 feet away from all other individuals.

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