

COVID-19 Guidance All Hands... from CAPT Philip E. Old, Chief of Staff

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The Office of the Secretary of Defense has published **Holiday Season Guidance**. As I'm sure you're aware, across both the nation and the world, we are seeing a massive increase in COVID-19 cases and resulting hospitalizations. In the United States, the 7-day average of new cases exceeded 170,00 per day, a 15% increase, and hospitalizations have recorded record highs for 14 consecutive days reaching over 85,000. At this point, COVID-19 is getting worse not better.

The NPS team has also seen a spike of active COVID-19 cases in the past two weeks. To illustrate, below is summary of recent positive COVID-19 cases:

- Spouse: likely local transmission—2 Close Contacts, 0 infections
- SVM: likely local transmission—2 Close Contacts, 0 infections
- SVM: Out of state travel—1 Close Contact, 1 infection
- SVM: Out of Liberty Area travel, indoor gathering—20 Close Contacts (9 AD NPS SVM), 0 infections (investigation pending)
- SVM: Out of state travel—3 Close Contacts, 3 infections
- SVM: Family visit from out of local area, went to indoor gathering—3 Close Contacts, 3 infections, 3 secondary infections
- SVM: Indoor gathering with above—3 close contacts, 3 infections
- Spouse: Family visit—3 close contacts, 0 infections

While there have been zero on-campus exposures, the foremost commonality of exposure leading to infections is indoor gatherings and close contacts, not travel.

To stay safe and healthy this holiday season, I strongly encourage all to limit exposure to persons outside of your immediate family if at all possible.

For those residing in military housing areas, a hopefully unnecessary but not so gentle reminder that the Presidio of Monterey Commander's order also contains guidance that governs your holiday gatherings ("Indoor gatherings inside of a residence, of any number of people from outside a single household are prohibited") and is enforceable for residents in La Mesa housing, Ft. Ord housing, and on the Presidio.

The best course is not to gather with people outside of your immediate family. But if you must, the more outside air the better—ensure the area is properly ventilated; open windows and doors, provide outside air to the gathering—and follow the simple but effective measures to break the chain of transmission.

- Maintain your distance

- Wear face coverings indoors and when within six feet
- Limit you time indoors
- If you or any of your guests have ANY symptoms, do NOT gather

Please consider carefully your plans for the upcoming Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. If you are not able to quarantine for the 14-days following the holiday, then please consider postponing your travel plans or having visitors.

Lastly, as you take stock of your blessings, I encourage you to reach out and look after others who may be separated from family and friends. This pandemic has taken a toll on all our psyches, and for some, the holiday season is a source of even greater stress. As we head into the holiday season, I know that many members of the NPS family were planning to travel to reconnect with family and friends but are now not able to and others who were expecting visitors who now cannot travel, as well as those with relatives who are isolated. It's been my experience that the more someone is focused on giving to others, the less likely someone is to be consumed by their own challenges.