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Dr. Scott Woolstenhulme, Superintendent

Wednesday, November 18, 2020

Dear Families of District 93 Student Athletes,

On Friday, November 13th, Governor Little and the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare issued the following public health order:

<https://coronavirus.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/stage-2-modified-order.pdf>

As a public school district, we have a legal responsibility to comply with public health orders, pursuant to Idaho Code 39-419. In addition, it is also important to understand that our hospitals are warning that the rising number of COVID cases are leading us to the verge of a healthcare crisis in Idaho Falls.

The public health order issued on Friday prohibits “gatherings of more than 10 people, both public and private.” Thankfully, this health order provides an exemption for classroom instruction which will allow us to continue with in-person learning. It also allows schools to continue extracurricular activities. It is important to recognize that instead of simply cancelling these activities for students, like we experienced last spring, the Governor preserved the opportunity for our students to continue participating in these activities.

However, participation in extracurricular activities is specifically limited to only those individuals “who are necessary for the competition to occur.” We have had lengthy discussions with our principals about band and cheer. While both of these groups have traditionally played an important supporting role for basketball and football, they are not strictly necessary for those competitions to occur. This is evident from the fact that they do not travel to every game or participate in many other athletic competitions, including soccer, volleyball, baseball, and softball. The IHSAA also received clarification that cheerleaders and pep band members would be counted as spectators under current statewide health orders. As a result, we are encouraging cheer teams and pep bands to organize their own competitions and events in which they are designated as participants.

We were notified of this order late Friday afternoon, which left little time for us to identify how we would meet the newly imposed limitations on public and private gatherings. On Friday, because of the challenge of limiting attendance to only 10 spectators, we initially communicated that it would not be possible to permit spectators at events. However, on Monday, our athletic directors met with other directors in the High Country Conference and reached a level of consensus on allowing 10 spectators at games. On Tuesday, we met with middle school and high school athletic directors and principals to identify how we can comply with this health order. Here are the steps that we will take:

- We will permit a maximum of 10 spectators at our home basketball games. Spectators will be limited to only one family member per participating student.
 - If necessary, family members may be assigned to certain games on a rotating basis to ensure equitable opportunities to attend.
 - Spectators from visiting teams will not be permitted at away games.
- We will also permit a maximum of 4 additional parent volunteers to fulfill the following essential responsibilities:
 - Operating the scoreboard and clock (home games only)
 - Keeping the scorebook
 - Keeping player stats for the game
 - Filming the game

Parents who wish to volunteer for these responsibilities should contact the coach of their child's team. Another family member of a parent volunteer will not necessarily be permitted as additional spectators.

- Spectators will be asked to leave the gymnasium following each game.
 - Family members will be readmitted to junior varsity and varsity games if they have other children participating in those events.
- Unfortunately, due to the high number of wrestlers who participate in events, we will not be able to allow any family members to attend the remaining middle school duals.
 - High school athletic directors are working on plans to permit one family member of high school wrestlers to attend duals only.
- Home high school basketball games and wrestling matches will be streamed via the NFHS network with monthly or annual passes available. (<https://www.nfhsnetwork.com>)
- Middle school basketball games and wrestling matches will be streamed for free via school Facebook pages.
- For families who purchased season passes, we will refund the prorated amount of games that both parents could not attend after we know how many games are impacted by this health order.

We are communicating with our elected officials to ask for a change in the health order to permit family members to attend our extracurricular events with appropriate precautions in place. At the same time, I hope that as a community, we will come together and take the necessary steps to slow the spread of COVID in Idaho Falls and our region to not only protect our activities and education, but also the lives and health of our fellow community members.

Sincerely,



Dr. Scott Woolstenhulme
Superintendent