

Background

This addendum is to the April 27th, COVID-19 in Southeast New Mexico Perspective and Pathway, the First Addendum dated May 4th, the Second Addendum dated May 11th, and the Third Addendum dated May 18th. Refer to the previous documents for background. This is an update of data through Wednesday, May 27, 2020. There was a delay so that any disruption in data collection during the Memorial Day weekend could be resolved.

Changes in New Mexico

COVID-19 infections continue to grow in New Mexico with the overwhelming majority of new cases in just a few counties. Between Saturday, May 16, and Wednesday, May 27, 11 days, the State count for positive tests went from 6,795 to 7,252 an increase of 1,405 or 20.7%. Since this was over eleven days rather than seven, it is appropriate to compare the average daily increases:

May 2-9	1,047 cases or 149.6 per day
May 9-16	1,069 cases or 152.7 per day
May 16-27	1,405 (11 days) or 127.7 per day

Between May 16 and 27 the largest increases were in McKinley, 406 new cases; San Juan, 326 new cases; Bernalillo, 189 new cases; and Dona Ana, 157 new cases. All other counties had only one or two digit increases or no increase. When compared with population, the “hot spots” continue to stand out. McKinley County had 28.9% of the new cases but has only 3.5% of the State’s population. Similarly, San Juan County had 23.2% of the new cases with just 6.1% of the State’s population. Bernalillo County had the third highest number with 13.5%, but as the most populous county, it has 32.4% of the State’s population. Dona Ana County had 11.2% of the increases but has only 10.3% of the State’s population. Dona Ana has emerged as a area worthy of closer review.

Beginning on Saturday, May 9th the State began reporting cases in detention facilities associated with federal law enforcement separate from county totals. Since then the State has added the Cibola County Correctional Center, the Otero County Prison Facility, and the Torrance County Detention Facility. On May 27th these detention facilities accounted for 208 out of 7,252 cases in the State or 2.9% of all cases. County percentages of cases reflect the percentage of the state total which includes these facilities although their numbers are not reflected in any county’s number.

Chaves County

Between Saturday, May 16 and Tuesday, May 26, the number of cases in Chaves county increased by 12. The number of cases went from 30 total positive to 42 positive, a 40% increase. In the same time period testing was increased from 2,497 tests to 3,590 tests, a 43.8% increase.

Interestingly back on May 16th 1.20% of the tests were positive, while on May 26th 1.17% were positive. The State percentage of test coming back positive is 3.95%

The situation in West Texas

As reported in the Second Addendum, effective Friday, May 1, 2020, the Governor of Texas authorized significant relaxation of restrictions throughout Texas. As of May 24th this lessening in restriction has been in effect for over three weeks.

Comments have been made about increases in cases in states that have relaxed restrictions. In the general literature, assertions have been made that these are due to increases in testing. That issue is outside the scope of this effort.

As noted in the original document, there is significant economic, cultural, and personal interaction between Southeast New Mexico and West Texas. There is very limited interaction between Southeast New Mexico and El Paso with the exception of Lincoln County. The Permian Oil basin, while centered in the Midland-Odessa area, extends into SE New Mexico. Even Curry and Roosevelt Counties have had some oil and gas operations. Geography, economy and culture intensely connect Southeast New Mexico with West Texas. The interaction between Eddy and Lea counties and the Midland/Odessa is particularly strong.

Concern has been expressed that the relaxation of restrictions in Texas could adversely impact SE New Mexico.

The Texas counties bordering SE New Mexico are Yoakum (Plains), Terry (Brownfield), Lubbock (Lubbock), Seminole (Gaines), Andrew (Andrews), Winkler (Kermit), Ector (Odessa), and Midland (Midland). The total population of this portion of Texas is approximately 700,000.

West Texas Permian Counties								
County	County Seat	Pop	Cases 4/30	Death 4/30	Cases 5/10	Death 5/10	Cases 5/17	Death 5/17
Yoakum	Plains	8,568	1	0	2	0	2	0
Terry	Brownfield	12,715	10	0	2	0	12	0
Lubbock	Lubbock	305,225	507	43	583	49	616	0
Gaines	Seminole	20,638	2	0	3	0	5	0
Andrews	Andrews	17,722	19	0	21	0	22	0
Winkler	Kermit	7,574	3	0	3	0	3	0
Ector	Odessa	157,087	78	4	95	4	109	4
Midland	Midland	165,049	75	6	101	11	120	12
Total		649,578	695	53	820	64	889	66
					125		69	
					18.0%		8.4%	

As reported on the Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) at Johns Hopkins University (JHU) website, the above cases were listed at 3 PM, MDT on April 30, 2020, at 3 PM MDT on May 10, 2020 and at 3 PM MDT on May 17, 2020.

Increase since 4/30				125		194		284	
%				18.0%		23.7%		31.9%	
NW NM		368,051	2,089	3,061		3,769		4,422	
Increase since 4/30				972		1,680		2,333	
Bernalillo		678,000	812	1,050		1,194		1,337	
Increase since 4/30				238		382		525	

During this time the number of cases in the five New Mexico Permian counties went from 70, or 2.05% of the New Mexico state total on April 30th to 160 cases or 2.30% of the state total on May 24th. The entire southeast region (as defined by the DOH) went from 90 cases or 2.59% to 187 cases or 2.69%. While the increase in southeast cases seems significant, it is proportionally less than the increases in West Texas and mostly in line with the remainder of the state.

West Texas does not seem to have been an adverse effect on Southeast New Mexico.

El Paso and Dona Ana

Data has not been collected on El Paso County Texas but checking the City website it reports on April 30th, 924 cases and 21 deaths. On May 24th the John Hopkins site lists 2,340 cases and 58 deaths, an increase of 153%. During that same time Dona Ana went from 144 cases to 407 cases or an increase of 183%. Dona Ana went from 4.2% of the New Mexico cases to 5.9% of the state’s cases.

Active Cases

Another more appropriate measure would be the number of “active cases”. This is the number of total cases minus deaths and recovered patients. Data on this was presented in the Third Addendum. The current data with number of tests is presented. There is concern about test numbers for the Memorial Day weekend.

Date	Active Cases	Increase	Tests
17-Apr	1,195		
24-Apr	1,823	628	12075
1-May	2,597	774	21306
8-May	3,303	706	30569
15-May	3,738	435	33157



22-May	4174	436	33157
26-May	4241	67	N/A

The data shows a significant slowing in the rate of increases of active cases. This is in spite of the continued growth in the northwest and the new growth in Dona Ana.

As of this time the DOH still has not released the numbers of recovered by county.

Hospitalization numbers

As stated previously, the initial concern was that the virus would overwhelm the local hospitals’ capacity to treat individuals. In fact this was the rationale for restricting citizens. Statewide the number in hospitals seems to have stabilized around 200. On Saturday, April 25, the number hospitalized was 161 on Wednesday, May 27th, it was 210 (the actual average is 192). During that time the low was 148 on April 26th and the high was 223 on May 15th.

Roswell has had five individuals in the hospital with COVID-19 since restrictions began. All have been treated and released. As of the morning of Wednesday, May 26th, there were NO COVID hospital patients in Chaves County. On that date there were only two COVID-19 patients in all of Southeast New Mexico counties or less than 1% of state total of 210.

Conclusion

Despite continued assurances that policy decisions are driven by “data” and “science”, it is apparent that only certain “data” is acceptable. The original Report to the Mayors Advisory Group and the four addendums (including this one) clearly establish that southeast New Mexico has not and is not experiencing a medical emergency. Therefore, the restrictions placed on this region are NOT reasonably necessary but are arbitrary and capricious.