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Montana hospitals, Department of Commerce partner to 'mask up' Montana

*45,000 cloth face coverings to be distributed through statewide network
of tourism visitor centers*

(Helena, Mont., July 10, 2020) – As part of an effort to limit the spread of COVID-19 across the state, the Montana Hospital Association and the Montana Department of Commerce today announced shipments of 45,000 free cloth face coverings to 25 communities statewide.

The Montana Hospital Association secured the reusable cloth face coverings and today begins shipping to distribution sites statewide. The face coverings are to be distributed free of charge to residents and visitors through the Department of Commerce's network of Convention and Visitor Bureau (CVBs) and tourism region visitor centers.

"If we want to keep our economy open and ensure our state's healthcare system has the capacity to treat all patients who need medical care, we need to mask up," said Rich Rasmussen, president and chief executive officer for the Montana Hospital Association. **"Until we have a vaccine, wearing a mask is one of the most simple and effective things we can do to keep the virus from shutting down our state. It also sets the tone with neighbors and visitors alike: Montanans wear masks and you should, too."**

The Department of Commerce is coordinating a statewide responsible visitor campaign in partnership with CVBs and Montana's nonprofit tourism regions to ensure visitors and residents are doing their part to slow the spread of COVID-19.

"We're asking visitors to our spectacular state to take the same safety precautions that Montanans are encouraged to follow," Montana Department of Commerce Director Tara Rice said. **"Masking up is one simple way all of us can slow the spread of COVID-19 and still enjoy Montana's authentic experiences."**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, state and local public health officials recommend cloth face coverings whenever in public in order to limit the spread of COVID-19.

According to a [recent study](#) from global investment firm Goldman Sachs, mask-wearing by every American could save the U.S. economy from a 5% drop in GDP, or approximately \$1 trillion in reduced economic spending.

The face coverings were produced by the National Council of Textile Organizations and made available through a joint program of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The face coverings are 100% cotton jersey, bind around face and ears, and are treated with a 0.5% OWG Agion AMB-10 Antimicrobial to prevent the growth of viruses and germs. The masks are adult-sized and washable up to 15 times.

Distribution will occur at visitor centers in the following cities: Anaconda, Belgrade, Billings, Boulder, Butte, Cooke City, Deer Lodge, Dillon, Gardiner, Glasgow, Great Falls, Havre, Helena, Kalispell, Livingston, Missoula, Philipsburg, Polson, Red Lodge, Sidney, Virginia City, West Yellowstone, Whitefish and Wolf Point.

About the Montana Department of Commerce

The Montana Department of Commerce promotes Montana's spectacular, unspoiled nature and charming towns in innovative and efficient ways, supports innovative and sustainable industries to strengthen Montana's economy, and creates affordable and vibrant communities for all Montanans.

About MHA

The Montana Hospital Association (MHA) is a nonprofit organization with more than eighty members that provide the full spectrum of health care services, including hospital inpatient and outpatient services, skilled nursing facilities, home health, hospice, physician services, assisted living, senior housing and insurance services. MHA is the principal advocate for the interests of its members in their efforts to improve the health status of the communities they serve and to make Montana a "Top 10 Healthy State."

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