http://newiprogressive.com/images/stories/S5/work-from-home-s5.jpg

Sen. Smith writes about public health measures to slow the spread of COVID-19, including the 'Safer at Home' order, and outlines other steps being taken by Governor Evers to address the short-term and long-term impacts of COVID-19.

EAU CLAIRE, WI - Every day, as we learn more about COVID-19 and adjust to the disruptions in our daily routine, we're being tested on how we, as a community, step up to a challenge and work toward a solution. Throughout the state, people are coming together to help others. I've heard so many of my friends ask, "What can I do to help?"

The best way to help right now is by staying home. We all have a role to play to slow the spread of COVID-19. Our collective efforts will only make our communities safer and more resilient. As a state, we'll get through this public health crisis by staying safer at home.

Since Governor Tony Evers declared a public health emergency in Wisconsin on March 13th, his administration has implemented 16 emergency orders to prevent the spread of COVID-19 while responding to repercussions of the public health crisis. On March 24th, Governor Evers issued the "Safer at Home" order, directing Wisconsinites to stay at home as much as possible, in order to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

The COVID-19 virus can spread between people who are in close contact to one another or through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes and another person in close proximity inhales, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. As stated by the World Health Organization, most individuals infected with COVID-19 experience symptoms similar to the common cold; however COVID-19 can cause severe respiratory illness and may lead to death, especially for older adults or individuals with underlying health conditions.

Protective public health measures and policies, like the “Safer at Home” order are imperative to slow the spread of COVID-19. Additionally, these preventative measures are in place to ensure healthcare providers have the capacity to care for the number of individuals infected with COVID-19 and others that are in-need of emergency medical care.

After having conversations with public health experts, business leaders and local elected officials, Governor Evers understood it was in the state’s best interest to implement the “Safer at Home” order. The “Safer at Home” order requires individuals to stay home, with limited exceptions, and requires non-essential businesses and operations to cease while the order is effective from March 25th to April 24th. The order is enforceable by local law enforcement and county sheriffs.

The “Safer at Home” order clarifies which businesses and operations are deemed essential, which includes, but is not limited to, farming and agricultural production, food banks and shelters, grocery stores and pharmacies, and manufactory industries. The “Safer at Home” order also provides mandatory guidelines on all forms of travel to further reduce the risk of COVID-19 community spread.

The Department of Health Services encourages Wisconsinites to get fresh air and exercise to stay healthy physically and mentally. You can still go out to walk your dog, visit a state park or go for a bike ride, but you should still maintain social distancing of six feet between others in public. Remember to continue following other public health practices to prevent the spread of COVID-19 by regularly washing hands with soap and water, covering coughs and sneezes, and cleaning high-touch surfaces.

The other emergency orders issued by Governor Evers are intended to address other consequences stemming from COVID-19. During the public health emergency, the orders will help expedite food delivery to grocery stores; extend unemployment insurance eligibility and remove the work search requirement; halt admissions to state prisons and juvenile facilities; suspend utility disconnections and waive late fees; and ban evictions and foreclosures.

Most recently, on Saturday March 28th, Governor Evers introduced a comprehensive legislative proposal to alleviate short-term and long-term challenges connected to COVID-19. I'm hopeful that all of my legislative colleagues can get behind these common-sense initiatives to protect our healthcare workers, help citizens practice their civic duty to vote, support Wisconsin workers and assist our local governments during this pandemic.

Every day, there are new updates about COVID-19. Be sure to stay up-to-date on ways to keep yourself and your loved ones healthy and learn about available resources by visiting: gov status.egov.com/wi-covid-19
.