

Vermont's COVID-19 guidelines hit local businesses hard

by Briana Supardi, CBS News 6 Albany || January 12, 2021

BENNINGTON, VT (WRGB) — Vermont's strict COVID-19 guidelines have paid off. The state currently has one of the lowest if not the lowest number of cases in the nation. but it comes at a high cost to local businesses.

"There's a cost at keeping everyone safe," said Lynn Green, co-owner of the Four Chimneys Inn in Bennington.

Vermont's total number of COVID-19 cases is currently just above 9,000, with a seven-day average of 27.6 cases per 100,000 people.

That's a fraction of New York's current case total which sits just under 1.2 million cases.



Dr. Anthony Fauci has applauded the Green Mountain State for its strict COVID-19 restrictions which have played a role in keeping numbers low.

But local business owners, especially those in the lodging industry, are feeling the impact.

"Things have tightened up so much in terms of restrictions with people needing to quarantine at home for 14 days prior to arrival or 7 days with a negative test, so not everyone qualifies and even if people do qualify, there's not a real appetite for traveling right now," said Green.

Green says business is down 60-percent. She and others in the lodging industry say the worst is yet to come.



“The consensus is that November, December, January are the worst months we have had ever, and the trend is downward,” said Green.

“Coming into January, February this year, it doesn’t look promising,” said Jack Orlando, co-owner of the Inn at Ormsby Hill in Manchester.

Orlando says his business is down to 20-percent occupancy. While he says federal assistance has cushioned the impact, it doesn’t come close to covering all the expenses.



“The PPE loan is helpful but that’s a small expense to our business,” said Orlando. “The major expenses are mortgage, rent, lights, heating and power expenses because we have to keep the place operating for one or two nights because some people might come so we have a very high expense and very low revenue coming in and i don't see it getting better.”

Vermont is also restricting people from gathering with other households, this means no weddings or business meetings.

“There are no gatherings. I mean even just families, you can just go for a walk with one other person from another household. You can’t do anything indoors. You can’t dine with other parties outside of your own household,” explained Green.

Restaurants are restricted to allowing only one household per table, which has proven tough for restaurant owner Jamie Hill who owns Kevin’s Sports Pub and Restaurant in North Bennington.

“It’s hard to get anybody in there right now, nobody wants to get sick, and I don't blame them,” said Hill.

Hill says he’s hoping the vaccine will get things back to normal by summer.