**FACEBOOK LIVE**

**4 MARCH 2021**

**40th COVID VIRTUAL TOWN HALL**

<https://fb.watch/423He1JqgR/>

**intro**

* Hey team MALMSTROM! colonel feugate opperman here with chief harper and doc salzman TO give you the latest UPDATE ON THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC. IN JUST UNDER A YEAR, WE’VE NOW DONE 40 OF THESE EVENTS. WHILE WE HAVE USED TECHNOLOGY TO OUR advantage, I DO LOOK FORWARD TO THE DAY IN THE FUTURE WHERE WE CAN HAVE TOWN HALL MEETINGS IN PERSON And nOT Dominated by covid news.
* I’M VERY ENCOURAGED BY THE RECENT FAVORABLE TRENDS IN STATISTICS LIKE THE DECREASES IN THE NUMBERS OF POSITIVE CASES, HOSPITALIZATIONS AND OTHER MEASUREMENTS WHICH INDICATE THAT THE BASIC PRACTICES WE’VE BEEN PREACHING THE PAST YEAR ARE WORKING.
* WE ALL need to keep up the most basic protection measures of handwashing, distancing, and mask-wearing. Also, even if you’ve received the vaccine or TESTED POSITIVE those rules still apply.
* WHEN THOSE MEASURES ARE PRACTICED CONTINUALLY AND FAITHFULLY, OUR NUMBERS GO DOWN. WHEN WE DON’T PRACTICE THEM, OUR NUMBERS GO UP. WHEN OUR NUMBERS GO UP, WE HAVE TIO IMPLEMENT MORE RESTRICTIVE MEASURES—AND NOBODY WANTS THAT.
* AS YOU MAY HAVE HEARD ALREADY, we have transitioned to Health Protection Condition Bravo from bravo plus. This is LARGELY due TO THE DECREASE IN POSITIVE CASES.
* Our HPCON is set to Bravo, but remains a scalable tool as we do with the restrictions we have in place, THAT WE CAN adjust UP OR DOWN to address changes in the threat. Some of the changes that signify our transition TO HPCON BRAVO are:
	+ Military members are now permitted to visit off base theaters. Social distancing and mask wear is still required. However, military members are still PROHIBITED from visiting bars, night clubs and casinos.
	+ speaking of theaters, aafes is looking to re-open the on base theater and is asking for your input on what you want to see. aafes prices are 20% less than off base, and they have committed to keeping the price the same as pre-covid. they offer concessions, beer and wine. on the **MALMSTROM AAFES EXCHANGE facebook page** is a listing of options. go out there and vote for your choice.
	+ On base, indoor public events are limited to 60 people or FEWER. Outdoor gatherings are limited to 200 people or FEWER.
	+ Private in-home gatherings are limited to 20 people or FEWER (on-base and off-base).
	+ Masks must be worn at all times, and social distancing must be in place.
* In mid-February we rescinded the policy that Airmen must be out of restaurants by 8 p.m. There is no longer a time regulation associated with eating in restaurants. However, tables must STILL be six feet apart.
* OUR MED GROUP continues to receive Moderna COVID vaccines on about a weekly basis.
* Vaccines are available at our clinic by appointment to all TRICARE beneficiaries 18 years and older; and to all Active Duty service members, GS employees and contractors. Call 731-4MED (That’s 731-4633) to schedule.

**Leave/travel**

* commanders are tasked with balancing risk with mission execution and airmen wellness. RoM may be shortened by the commander by accepting increased risk to the unit Upon return from travel
* Remember that if you’re traveling outside of the 1-hour radius, even if you’re not on leave, you must notify and clear it with your supervisor.
* squadron commanders also have the opportunity to have their airmen tested upon return from leave to shorten the rom period.
* check the maps before you go and when you return for the status of the area you’re traveling to so that you know who you need to check with for your leave request and so you know who to contact upon return.

**TESTING/contact tracing**

* Call 731-4MED for testing time if you feel sick, if you’ve been told by the city public health team, or if you’re a contact and you’re not sure when to come.
* EVERYONE WHO IS A TRICARE BENEFICARY is highly encouraged to GET TESTED IN OUR LINE at the clinic on base—IT’S FASTER AND WE CAN CONTACT TRACE MORE QUICKLY
* again, please call before coming through the drive thru or the clinic as we are conducting testing by appointment only.
* IF YOUR ROOMMATE OR DEPENDENT IS SICK—STAY AT HOME! IF THEY GOT TESTED FOR COVID, PLEASE DON’T COME BACK TO WORK UNTIL THE RESULT COMES BACK NEGATIVE.
* Everyone must **continue to wear masks** in all buildings and vehicles. No change to the limited exceptions.
* Remember Parents need to stay home with quarantined kids – the only exception to this is if parent has tested positive and recovered in the last 90 days.

**Pre-Question Check-in**

* Well, before we start taking questions: **Chief**, are there any shoutouts you’d like to give?

**CHIEF Harper:** I do have a shoutout. how about our medics? what a herculean effort they’ve had in the last couple of months executing our covid-19 vaccination plaN, from the mass vaccination efforts and Not only was it on the line but there were members who backfilled those members and got an opportunity to help out those on the line and worked the appointments and the different phases. A phenomenal job from our medics so a virtual high-five to our medics! i love you guys!

**Col Feugate Opperman:** Thanks Chief! That’s Awesome! alright Doc Salzman, what do you have for us?

**Doc Salzman:** Oh my goodness! first of all, great job to everybody – families, airmen, everyone – because what we’re doing is working. we’re seeing positive trends across the base. we’re seeing that working units like the flights and the squadrons are working with everybody assigned so people aren’t falling out. so i really appreciate everyone and the efforts you’ve made to make your work places safe to be in so that we can limit the amount of risk that we accept by going there and working in those spaces.

secondly, so we’ve seen in our community and our local area the numbers are also down trending. when I talk with local health care providers and the public health department at benefis, they attribute that to people starting finally to do what’s right and wearing their masks in places that are close, and also vaccination efforts. they’re doing a really good job out there and getting vaccines into arms and its really making a difference. So Hooray! There’s a light at the end of the tunnel.

that being said we’re still in the tunnel. I would ask everyone to pick your favorite mask and keep it clean and keep wearing it for right now. I don’t think this will be a forever situation so we’re getting there.

the new things we’re seeing, the new studies just comng out are showing the vaccines that we have are maybe even more effective than we thought – so that’s great. They’re testing as we vaccinate the population and across the country we’re seeing it is safe for more and more and more people. So it is very promising.

i would say go out and get your vaccine. and certainly if you have questions or you’re not sure if it is for you, give us a call at the Med Group. we’re happy to take time out to talk about your conditions specifically if you have questions to help you understand what your benefits and risks are so you can make an informed decision.

**col Feugate opperman:** (to Doc Salzman) To put you on the spot a little bit, there was discussion recently about… so montana has rescinded the mask wear policy. what about cascade county?

**Doc Salzman:** That’s a great question. when montana rescinded the mask wear policy, cascade county took a look at what the risks are and what the comfortable risk threshold is and they said “when we see two full weeks of less than 15 cases per 100,000 per day” that they will also rescind their mask wear policy. and we’re coming up on that because the county is doing really well. so the county might roll back their mask wear requirement. now that being said i’m still a little bit uncomfortable -- you know how i like to protect my airmen – because you can still get sick out there. there are still people who are sick and I think we’ll probably see a bump in cases in the county when this happens. so I would suggest that in order to protect our mission our airmen still wear their masks until we can see what happens in our community but also we can have a greater number of us vaccinated or recovered so that we can be protected because those variants as they come across the country are kind of a little unknown to us and we’d like to not be on the front wave of “what’s see what happens if I get COvid twice?”

**Col feugate opperman:** Speaking of masks, we’re transitioning to our questions…

**questions**

**Question 1: When will enough of the base population be vaccinated to the point where we don’t have to wear a mask anymore?**

**Answer 1:** That’s an excellent question. So COVID is a virus and it’s changing. When we calculated a herd immunity threshold for the U.S. variant several months ago and we said if we can get to 75 percent vaccinated or recovered we’d be at a herd immunity threshold where it would be safe to take down our masks. That’s a calculated number so we’re guessing based on science, but we’re guessing. So we think when we get to that number, if we take down our masks we’ll stay healthy as a population and we’ll be able to take care of those who do get sick. Now, we didn’t calculate in the variants because they weren’t here yet. Some of those variants are more contagious or more fatal to people who get them so that will change the calculation for herd immunity. So for right now it’s 75 percent because we don’t have those variants reported to Montana that I know of, but when they come that may change the recommendation by the CDC and me to go back to mask wear until we can be sure we are safe from the things that have reached our borders.

**Q2: Does the 90-day ROM-free recovery period still apply? If I got COVID two months ago and I went to Bozeman this weekend, do I have to ROM when I come back?**

**A2:** If you got COVID two months ago you should still be in a window of immunity, meaning you shouldn’t have to ROM when you come back. I would expect that your immune system still has antibodies that will recognize any COVID that comes in and quickly eliminate it. That being said, if you start to feel symptoms you need to come see me because you could be our first case of a variant. I still want to know if you’re feeling sick, 1) so I can take care of you and 2) so I can test you so to find out what is our risk to you going back to work to your other workmates.

**Q3: Can I receive the vaccine on base if I am a TRICARE Select beneficiary?**

**A3:** Yes.

**Q4: If I receive the vaccine and something goes wrong, will the VA cover that after the fact? So I’m on active duty now, I got the vaccine and what have you, I go to separate or retire. Since the vaccine is under the emergency use authorization will I be covered by the VA?**

**A4:** Yes. The VA will cover anything that’s in your medical records. So before you separate we will go through your medical record carefully and make sure everything that has happened to you since you’ve been in uniform is carefully documented and worked out and if anything is broken we’re committed to fixing it before you leave us. So if for some reason – I don’t anticipate anything will go wrong if you get the vaccine – but if anything were to happen you would come see me and I would help make you better and that would be in your medical records so that someday when you get out that will still be there and the VA will take care of you as they would for anything.

**Col Feugate Opperman:** Great! Thanks. So no more questions right now. We’ll welcome any other questions. Anything additional to add or anything from your comments about the vaccine or anything that the questions spurred?

**Doc Salzman:** So I would say if you haven’t gotten your vaccine yet or if you’re waiting to see what happens if your friends got it – if I’m talking to you and you’re one of those people – well, I will say it has been enough time. We’re now into March and we’ve been doing this for a while. I would look around you and see how your friends are doing who got the vaccine and are they doing fine? I will tell you, based on the scientific reporting from across the country and around the world, it’s safe. I would consider your choices and give me a call if you want to talk it over. So that would be thing number one. Thing number two is please please, please don’t take it easy on this stuff [points to mask]. The easy stuff works. And this is why our flu numbers have been down and we’ve seen so little illness in our other typical winter viruses and winter illnesses. It’s because we’ve been wearing these. And that helps us to be operationally ready. When we get kicked around by COVID it helps to not have those things keeping us down. So keep up the good work. I really appreciate it. It makes my job easier.

**Col Feugate Opperman:** Great. Thanks. And Chief and I have both had both of our doses of the vaccine. We’re feeling alive and good. Doctor Salzman has too.

**Doc Salzman:** And for those of you who have gotten COVID and have recovered and are thinking, “Why should I get a vaccine?” I will tell you that an interesting study came out that shows if you have recovered from COVID and then you get vaccinated, you have 1,000 times more neutralizing antibodies than a person who never got COVID. So, it will protect you with extra layers of bubble wrap. So that’s so exciting.

**Chief Harper:** I also have one last thing for those who are out there and saying “what’s in it for me? If I get the vaccine I still have to wear the mask.” I just offer hope. What else do we have? I want to get out of this mask like anyone else. I feed off smiles and I can’t see people’s smiles. I love shaking hands. So for me it’s hope. It’s hope for the nation as we go forward, if that’s any consolation to go out and get your vaccine.

**Col Feugate Opperman:** Thanks Chief. There’s many people I’ve never seen from the nose down because of the masks! So it will be like meeting everybody all over again when we finally get out of the masks. Alright, thank you both for that.

**closing**

**Women’s history month**

* March is women’s history month and we have some cool events scheduled
* THIS WEEK I WAS FORTUNATE TO HAVE PARTICIPATED IN A LEADERSHIP PANEL ON tUESDAY WITH COL MARTINEZ, ChIEF wOLFE AND SEVERAL OTHER NOTABLE WOMEN WHO HAVE ACHIEVED MUCH IN THEIR AIR FORCE CAREERS. THEIR STORIES WERE INSPIRING AND THE QUESTIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE GENERATED SOME FANTASTIC DISCUSSION.
* On MONDAY March 8th, which is international women’s day, CHIEF HARPER AND I ARE HOSTING A KICKOFF COFFEE AT THE GRIZZLY BEND AND the chapel will be hosting a meditation and craft fair from 1100-1300.
* march 10th there will be a school-age women’s career day at the youth center
* friday march 12th will be a women’s empowerment team workout competition at 0800 in the fitness center. GRAB SOME FRIENDS, SIGN UP YOUR TEAM, AND Please come out!

**MHS Genesis**

* MHS Genesis, THE NEW DOD ONLINE HEALTH RECORD goes live april 24th so be sure to STAY TUNED FOR STEPS YOU NEED TO TAKE IN ADVANCE TO ENSURE A SMOOTH TRANSITION. THAT’S A SATURDAY SO THE TRANSITION SHOULD BE TRANSPARENT, BUT THE MED GROUP WILL BE REDCING THEIR APPOINTMENT LOAD AS THE GO LIVE DATE DRAWS NEAR SO THEY CAN DEVOTE FULL ATTENTION TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MHS GENESIS. WITH THIS NEW HEALTH RECORD SYSTEM, YOU CAN:
	+ VIEW YOUR HEALTH INFORMATION SECURELY ONLINE
	+ EXCHANGE MESSAGES WITH YOUR CARE TEAM
	+ REQUEST PRESCRIPTION RENEWALS
	+ VIEW NOTES FROM YOUR VISIT AS WELL AS TEST RESULTS
	+ SCHEDULE MEDICAL AND DENTAL APPOINTMENTS
	+ AND MUCH MORE
* finally, i want to give a shoutout to fss who continues to come up with events and activities that meet our health restrictions while offering aIRMEN AND FAMILIES THE CHANCE TO UNWIND A LITTLE FROM PANDEMIC FAITIGUE. FOR EXAMPLE…
	+ There is a 3-pt competition at the Fitness Center tomorrow (Friday) from 1700 to 1900, but if that’s not your cup of tea we have First Friday starting at 3:41 – come celebrate a St. Patty’s themed event: corned beef, cabbage, potatoes, carrots, rolls, and cupcakes!
	+ For those of you who haven’t heard, the Fitness Center opened up a second entrance to the facility on the Bldg 1010 side to best support the needs of the installation. There are also two in-person class offerings: Strong Nation and Zumba – call 731-3600 for the schedule and more details! While you’re there – sign up for 24/7 access at the Front Desk.
	+ As a reminder – please wipe down your equipment after use and do not attend any FSS events if you are not feeling well, thank you for your support!
* ok wing one, **thank you for remaining dedicated in TAKING ON THIS PANDEMIC** and for keeping the mission going no matter what challenges come our way.
* I’m so grateful for your professionalism AND SELFLESS SERVICE
* Let’s keep taking care of each other! see you next time!