

Weekly Briefing Sheet 2020 11 25

INSIGHTS COLLECTIVE
Pandemic Economics Think Tank



VIRUS

Colorado Gov. Jared Polis announced changes to the state's COVID-19 dial system, adding a new "level purple," which will be considered the stay-at-home phase of response. The category will apply to counties that are reflecting high numbers for all three dial categories: incidence rate, testing positivity rate and increasing hospitalizations. Source: [Summit Daily](#) / Interactive Map: [here](#)

And why is that important [Insights Collective] ... No counties are moving into level purple currently. However, 20 counties (Adams, Alamosa, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Clear Creek, Denver, Douglas, Jefferson, La Plata, Logan, Mesa, Morgan, Otero, Prowers, Pueblo, Routt, Summit, Washington and Weld) will be moving into the newly defined "severe risk" level red – the highest level before stay-at-home orders are implemented. The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environments' effort to inform and provide transparent data is something to celebrate. While restrictions and shutdowns are not desirable, **providing information to help residents, and visitors, make good decisions is a step in the right direction.**

Meanwhile, many in-state organizations continue to be proactive in messaging, such as the Aspen Chamber Resort Associations' Save Our Season effort, [here](#).

REOPENING

Motels and other short-term and vacation rental businesses in St. Joseph, Minnesota are temporarily exempt from paying the city's lodging tax. The motion passed to suspend collection of the three-percent tax from December 1 through June 1, 2021. The suspension follows a reduced liquor license fees for bars and restaurants that passed earlier this year. St. Joseph's lodging tax is the primary source of funding for the city's convention and visitor's bureau, which will now be funded through a small rainy-day fund. Source: [WJON](#)

And why is that important [Insights Collective] ... Destinations are making every effort to impress potential visitors – including the reduction or pausing of taxes and fees. This might be more of a feel good factor than one that makes sense mathematically, but **if 'not paying the tax' makes a difference to some travelers, then St. Joseph wants to capitalize on that segment.**

ECONOMY

Manitou Springs, Colorado has launched an eCommerce site which allows shoppers to purchase local crafts. This new online shopping venture, Manitou Made, is possible thanks to CARES Act funds aimed at the city's economic recovery. It's a brainchild of the Manitou Springs Chamber of Commerce and the Visitors Bureau & Office of Economic Development. There are 20 participating merchants. Source: [KOAA](#)

And why is that important [Insights Collective] ... The effort is a direct response to COVID-19, allowing business owners who have never sold online before to expand their customer base. Manitou Springs small business owners continue to have a growth mindset despite the current economic crisis, **they simply needed a vehicle like Manitou Made to simplify the process** of launching an eCommerce store and a very intentional, individualized educational support system.

LODGING

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Booking.com now requires properties to meet cleanliness scores of at least six out of 10 – or risk removal from the site. The new “Minimum Cleanliness Score Commitment” is being phased in over the next six months, in partnership with quality management platform Properly. Currently less than one percent of its alternative accommodations are below six in cleanliness. Source: [PhocusWire](#)

And why is that important [Insights Collective] ... Cleanliness and comfort have always been important factors - today even more so than ever. The use of the words ‘clean’ and ‘hygiene’ have increased by over 60% on the platform since the start of the pandemic, a direct response to consumer preference to feel safe.

For travelers that perceive hotels to be safer than vacation rentals (more sanitation, hygiene & social-distancing regulations), setting and **marketing measurable standards like Booking.com is doing could be an important step in helping vacation rentals overcome that perception.**

NEW REALITIES

Since March 12, there have been 1,235 lawsuits (including 116 class actions) filed against employers due to alleged labor and employment violations related to the coronavirus. Some federal lawmakers are trying to shield businesses from COVID-19-related lawsuits as they struggle to operate under evolving guidelines during the pandemic. Other lawmakers are concerned that employers would not take proper steps to safeguard workers if they received such protections. Source / Topic Primer: [SHRM](#)

And why is that important [Insights Collective] ... The insurance issue is going to have a significant impact on business travel including convention facility liability. What will the premiums be on a facility that hosts tens of thousands of convention attendees?

For now, business travel is down partly because some people are afraid to fly and partly because **companies fear liability if an employee contracts COVID-19 while traveling for work**

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A proposed federal law faces an uphill battle due to stalled negotiations over the next coronavirus relief package, however, the federal Safe to Work Act, [S. 4317](#) would temporarily protect businesses, nonprofits, health care providers and educational institutions that follow public health guidelines while still holding businesses accountable for willful misconduct and gross negligence.

Many Republican legislators and business groups support a nationwide liability shield. The federal proposal would apply retroactively to pending coronavirus-related actions through at least Sept. 30, 2024. Many Democrat lawmakers and labor-union leaders who oppose business liability protection say workers are risking their safety to receive a paycheck.

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The COVID-19 Briefing Sheet is a weekly distribution of Insights Collective, an industry Think Tank focused on leading resorts and destinations through the New Realities of management, marketing, and positioning. It is made possible by contribution from other civic minded organizations including Red Sky Travel Insurance.

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