

## [See NWCCOG Coronavirus Resource Guide here](#)

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please forward them to this link.*

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### THANK YOU

*So many of our Members are doing tremendous front-line public service through this difficult time; if you are one of them, Thank you, you are appreciated more than ever for your public service. I've been privileged to be on daily update calls with both Eagle County and Summit County EOC, and it is assuring to listen in to collaboration going on in real-time.*

## From the Director's Desk: The Lost Art of Hunkering Down: Can we Chill?

Even as public health directives to curb COVID-19 ramp up, it is important to know that this situation, before it passes, will put us through both a personal and a collective journey. Before the waiting is done, time will pass excruciatingly for many of us like a kind of enforced metabolism or incarceration. The change of pace will ruthlessly expose us-to ourselves.

### **Phase 1: Realize this crisis real, go buy stuff!**

Within 5-7 days in Pitkin, Eagle and Summit Counties and across the nation, this situation went from distant news to intimately present for most citizens. During the rush on retail shelves that emerged suddenly last week, our survival, reptile, monkey minds were on full display as many scrambled to fill pantries and freezers for the long haul. Shelves were emptied revealing our greatest fear is running out of toilet paper, second only to water and bleached based cleaning products.

Later it was food. We may become cooks again. My son returning from CSU stopped to pick up fishing supplies in Northern Colorado and noticed another phenomenon- people clearing shelves of ammunition and back ordering weapons. Ominously, since they were not clearing the shelves of fishing gear to survive, it can only be guessed they were [back ordering guns](#) to protect themselves from other people. Scary. Let it not come to that. I don't think that happened during the Great Depression. Clearly



many Americans are anxious during the front edge of this crisis, they are busy hoarding and preparing. In this phase there is much to do. Last week our family spent 4x what we normally do on groceries-more like preparing for a two week trip to Lake Powell with increasing urgency each day.

**Phase 2: Hunker Down.** Figure out how to work from home if you can (or go home if you can). Dr Anthony Fauci, who is emerging as the sanest voice of this event at the Federal level suggested that Americans "[hunker down](#)." They will be doing so without live sports or social gatherings. This could have been a perfect March Madness excuse! Governor Polis suggested we "[only go out for necessities](#)." Right now, there is no telling how long social distancing, and the restrictions or closures being announced will last. It will be weeks. It could be months. The impacts could be enormous--so be cool. Try to be cool, please. We are about to have a massive social experiment on whether Americans can just chill out for a while without the activities and social tools that enable our nearly constant restlessness.

**Phase 3: Romanticize it.** Catch up on sleep. Do some chores. Read a book. Binge watch that series. Get in shape or get really fat. Call Grandma. Some in the high country or rural areas who have been here for a while see this activity of stocking up and then wintering-in for a season of prolonged isolation as familiar, in rhythm with why we live here. How we live, work and travel today would have been strange just a couple generations ago. Intensively be in the now. Or pretend you are in another time. You will know we have slipped back into a different time if CPW opens up



a Spring hunting season to relieve hunger. We are not at one with the earth-see if you can re-channel that connection for the sake of all of us.

**Phase 4: Restlessness.** This will get interesting. The behaviors being suggested do not play to most of our strengths. Certainly not mine. In spite of living in the land of plenty Americans are renowned for over-valuing being busy and working longer hours than many peers around the globe. It keeps us amped up and keeps us from reflecting. Many of us define who we are by what we do. We measure and compete on how we do it. Guilty. Even our time-off tends to be over-programmed with semi-frantic transitions from activity to activity. How we absorb media is often described as a "binge." We are challenged to just "be." The degree to which we learn to chill out during this time will be a gift to the many whose lives could literally be saved by our collective isolation and studious inactivity. That is a very foreign notion.

**Phase 5: Try old fashioned relating by telling stories**(longer than a tweet). If you prefer knitting or have other crafts to lean upon, then do so. It is a great time for puttering in the shop. If you lack the tools to begin carving stone or wood, or start making stained glass, mosaic windows, storytelling and taking the time to listen are low budget crafts which are becoming lost arts. Art can provide a shared context. Maybe tell your own story now because you have the time. It is also a form of self-therapy. Here is my go at that:

*I remember taking our son and daughter to visit the Denver Aquarium when they were just past diaper-young. It was the cornerstone activity of a Saturday to motivate the kids. We drove down from Eagle to be there soon after the doors opened. After passing through the entrance and grand foyer, we emerged into a dark tunnel with fish tanks built into the wall. The kids rushed from tank to tank to see what creature each contained. Some creatures were dynamic and induced curiosity, making them linger, many other creatures were not readily evident. At*

one larger tank, we all paused there because it was larger with a lot of fish. We lingered also because a father was crouching at eye-level with his son, intently watching one fish in a tank. They were of a different skin color than ours which was novel to my children. It took a while to discern which creature inside demanded so much of their attention.

## THE ART OF GREAT STORYTELLING



*The father and son were silent for some time. They were so patiently intent that it captured my kids attention. Their focus was mildly discomforting. I had a thought which I kept to myself -- that this tank was clearly a context exhibit and not a feature exhibit. After a while I realized we all had to be watching a fish that wasn't moving much. Then the father said to his son, "see that fish, that one back there? Watch how he is just chilling." It was spoken with a cadence of reverence. My kids were already moving on by then. Most of the aquarium was yet to be visited. There were mega-fauna to see, and a planned sequence to the day after rushing through the exhibits: lunch, bathrooms, gift shop, a photo, a few strategic shopping visits to fill the back of the mini-van before we blasted back up into the mountains with children asleep in the back. We were not chill, but damn did we nail that day.*

This past week has been a cascade of Public Health Orders in the high country, which have been proactive, wise and appropriate to meet the emerging situation by reducing social contact and opportunities for the virus to spread in order to flatten the transmission curve. We will adjust through these phases; and then, as we practice our social distancing with cupboards and arsenals stocked, workplaces, schools and public gathering places temporarily closed, major sports on TV canceled, many of us will figure out how to do what we do at a different pace while there is less external stimuli directing us what to do. Will our internal clocks reset?

It is likely that COVID-19 will be the largest shared cultural experience of the past 50 years. In many measures of modern living, mostly being active and making enough money, whether we see it or not, most of us have not been keeping up economically, or socially, or to the expectations we set for everything. Many people will actually fall behind before our eyes during this time. We are in denial about this, and we have not yet collectively been able to see the suffering as a shared experience. I will avoid the litany of examples of national policy that reflect this disconnection. They are many.

If we can tolerate ourselves for the next few months, we may emerge better equipped to be more compassionate. There will be many we know who suffer greatly during this time, without a paycheck, having to close a business, having to go without. Much of this will occur beyond the reach of our direct action. Perhaps we will see ourselves in all that and be a little less quick to shame others who are not able to keep pace. Perhaps our policies will take a cue from that change.

There will be front-line people who will be heroic for us, but for most, our greatest service will be our patience. The most significant test of which will be with ourselves. How we each react to the phases of this emerging event, specifically as we hunker down and stop racing each other, racing ourselves-- I have to wonder how it will effect us.

If there is despair, it will be familiar to Public Health officials who were intently focused in recent years on a more slowly emerging public mental health and substance abuse crisis, now focused on a more acute risk. The most pressing question will be, "how do

I deal with me?"

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NWCCOG offices are closed to the public and most staff are working remotely so please contact them by phone or email. AAAA is in full-tilt mode adapting to meet the needs of Older Americans across the region. Energy Program Employees are on paid leave, thanks to the Colorado Energy Office. There is no date yet for resuming field inspections. The Elevator Inspection Program has suspended field inspections and are catching up on a back-log of remote work. More than half of our programs and nearly 50 employees regularly work remotely. For more detailed and current status, please call your usual contact at NWCCOG.

## Humanizing Hoarding...

judging vs. compassion

In the upcoming weeks, the Alpine Area Agency on Agency had planned to host a seminar on how to understand the hoarding impulses exhibited by some in our community with the lens toward extending compassion and understanding rather than judging and condemnation. (Like all upcoming events, AAAA will reschedule seminars about Hoarding when possible.) [Jennifer Hanzlick](#) the guest speaker is an expert in the field of helping people declutter; she has a unique ability to help people recognize that hoarders have mental and sometimes physical issues that exacerbate the disorder.



To the casual observer hoarding is a disgusting demonstration of someone's inability to manage even the smallest things in life - the inability to let go of junk, to keep trash, in fact to keep everything - literally. In the United States there are an estimated 15 million people with a disorder that is serious and complex enough to cause acute hoarding that is often exacerbated by depression and anxiety. According to Hanzlick these people are ashamed of their situations, not realizing it is an illness which can be treated, and think they are the alone in the

world where roughly 2% - 5% of Americans are in the same circumstance.

The problem swells through public shaming and threats of eviction, fines, and even jail. Even when homes are forcibly cleaned up by public officials there is a 90% recidivism rate according to Hanzlick. People who are hoarders need behavioral health intervention.

In Hanzlick's 2009 [TedXBoulder](#) presentation, she defines the Hoarding disorder as having four parts:

1. Excessive accumulation of stuff.
2. Extreme difficulty in discarding trash or items that are no longer useful.
3. Living spaces that can no longer be used for their intended purpose.
4. Thoughts of letting go of the clutter causing extreme distress and impairment.



Many of us have hoarding tendencies of one kind or another - it might be shoes, or tools, or old trophies from high school, or mementos long-past holding on to. Currently some of us might be hoarding toilet tissue for some, as yet unknown, reason. Usually, we are not judged as having a disorder and mostly we are compassionate with and sometimes even laugh at ourselves and our "collections". But for others, the clutter in their mind and in their homes is overwhelming - and instead of judging them harshly, perhaps we could afford them some compassion.

*[Watch for news about rescheduling the Humanizing Hoarding Seminar in the future.](#)*

**NWCCOG Energy Program keeping all of us safer...**



While many of us are focused on COVID-19, our Energy team continues to meet the needs of our neighbors through their efforts in helping to keep people's homes warm and energy efficient. The homes selected for efficiency upgrades and safety assurance procedures were often built before 1978. If that's the case, they almost assuredly contain asbestos.

According to the leading experts, asbestos is a group of six naturally occurring fibrous minerals composed of thin, needle-like fibers. Exposure to asbestos causes several cancers and diseases, including [mesothelioma](#) and [asbestosis](#). Although asbestos strengthens and fireproofs materials, it is banned in many countries. Asbestos is not banned in the United

States - but it is highly regulated.

Regulations are due to studies in which it was proven that asbestos causes diseases such as mesothelioma, lung cancer, and asbestosis - none of which have cures. To keep our employees and our clients safe, eight members of our Energy program team were recently trained and certified in identifying asbestos in homes they are working on to improve energy efficiency. Our team can detect asbestos and can often find workarounds so as not to disturb it - as disturbance of asbestos is what releases the fibrous materials that can cause disease. Asbestos, left alone, is benign - but stirred up, can cause real problems.

We're proud to be leading the efforts to keep each other safer - every little bit helps.

Don't just sit there -- do something!

## Make some Civic Improvements while you Social Distance yourself...



*It has never been easier to respond to the census on your own...*



whether online



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or by mail

Every 10 years, the United States counts everyone who lives in the country, regardless of age, nationality, or ability. It is important for everyone to respond to the 2020 Census so that communities like yours can receive the funding they need for health care, accessibility services, and more.

Respond today at **2020census.gov**  
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[Complete the survey here](#) - right now.

## Next NWCCOG COUNCIL MEETING

**Thursday, March 26, 2020**

***Full Council Meeting***

Teleconference Call: Number to be distributed

Time: 10:00 a.m.- 11:00 a.m.

Primary Agenda Items: Approval of final 2019 Financials, program updates

**Northwest Colorado Council of Governments**

**[www.nwccog.org](http://www.nwccog.org)**

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