



## Hidalgo County Commissioners Court

**Richard F. Cortez**  
*County Judge*

**David L. Fuentes**  
*Commissioner, Precinct 1*

**Eduardo "Eddie" Cantu**  
*Commissioner, Precinct 2*

**Everado "Ever" Villarreal**  
*Commissioner, Precinct 3*

**Ellie Torres**  
*Commissioner, Precinct 4*

**OFFICE OF  
COUNTY JUDGE  
RICHARD F. CORTEZ**

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## NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Friday, January 8, 2021

### **Hidalgo County Judge tightens safety restrictions after state re-designates the area a high hospitalization area**

**EDINBURG** – Hidalgo County businesses must reduce their operations to 50 percent capacity from 75 percent and Hidalgo County hospitals must hold off on elective surgical procedures under a new order issued Friday by Hidalgo County Judge Richard F. Cortez.

The order comes as Hidalgo County and other parts of the Rio Grande Valley have been re-designated a high hospitalization area because of the number of patients being treated for COVID-19. The order is effective one minute after midnight on Friday, January 8, and shall remain in effect until it is modified or rescinded.

Judge Cortez issued the order one day after being notified by Dr. John Hellerstedt, Commissioner of the Texas Department of State Health Services, that the Rio Grande Valley was once again a high hospitalization region.

"With the holidays, we have been concerned for weeks about the hospitalization rate," Judge Cortez said. "While much of the community is rightly focused on COVID-19 vaccinations, this is a stark reminder that the virus continues to impact our community and we must continue to exercise caution around other people."

Under an executive order signed by Governor Greg Abbott last September 17, most of Texas was allowed to increase business occupancy rates to 75 percent of capacity. Hospitals were also allowed to begin elective surgeries. The order said any region that had a week-long COVID-19 patient load averaging 15 percent or less of the total caseload must use the looser restrictions.

Those regions above 15 percent had to keep the tighter restrictions. The four counties of the Rio Grande Valley – Hidalgo, Cameron, Starr and Willacy – initially were above the threshold but later fell below the 15 percent mark.

In the last seven days, however, the Rio Grande Valley region has had a hospitalization rate of 18.8 percent, exceeding the threshold and triggering the tighter safety measures. Please see the full order [here](#).

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*Hidalgo County is home to one of the fastest growing regions in the nation. We provide health and justice to the over 800,000 residents of our county. We strive to be accessible and responsive to our citizens by providing excellent public service through the values of leadership, transparency, fairness, collaboration, respect and fiscal responsibility. Follow our social media feed at [www.co.hidalgo.tx.us/followus](http://www.co.hidalgo.tx.us/followus)*