



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**

Public Affairs Division

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, February 23, 2021

Hidalgo County Judge Richard F. Cortez increases occupancy capacity limits due to drop in hospitalizations

EDINBURG – In his capacity as the county’s Emergency Management Director, Hidalgo County Judge Richard F. Cortez has issued an order increasing occupancy capacity limits at establishments. The new order goes into effect on Wednesday, February 24, 2021 at 12:01 a.m. and remains in effect until rescinded by the County Judge.

The Texas Department of Health and Human Services (DSHS) recently notified Judge Cortez that due to a drop in hospitalizations the county no longer meets the threshold set out in Executive Order GA-32, and may reopen some establishments at 50 percent capacity and others at up to 75 percent capacity.

“The combination of vaccinations and adherence to facial coverings and social distancing has lowered our hospitalization numbers,” said Judge Cortez. “Although this is a step in the right direction, I urge our county residents to remain vigilant and continue to uphold the safety measures set forth by medical experts.”

The new orders include the following:

- Bars and similar business establishments that hold a permit from Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission (TABC) where more than fifty-one percent (51%) of their gross receipts from the sale of alcoholic beverages, may offer on-premises services at up to fifty percent (50%) of the total listed occupancy of the establishment. The 50% occupancy limit applies only indoors; the limit does not apply to outdoor areas, events, or establishments.
- Business entities that are providing goods and services directly to the public, including but not limited to open-air (flea markets, farmers markets), and retail businesses must adhere to Minimum Standard Health Protocols.
- Elective surgeries and procedures may resume.
- Any outdoor gathering in excess of ten (10) people is prohibited, unless the Mayor of the City in which the gathering is held or the Hidalgo County Judge in the case of a gathering in an unincorporated area, approves of the gathering, and such approval is made subject to applicable conditions or restrictions.
- Household social gatherings, including family gatherings, shall not include more than ten (10) persons.
- Public schools may operate as provided by, and under the minimum standard health protocols found in guidance issued by the Texas Education Agency (TEA).

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The following establishments can operate at up to seventy-five percent (75%) of the total listed occupancy:

- Swimming pools
- Water parks
- Museums and libraries
- Zoos, aquariums, natural caverns, and similar facilities
- Amusement parks
- Professional, collegiate, and similar sporting events
- Rodeos and equestrian events
- Religious services conducted in churches, congregations, and houses of worship.
- Local government operations, including county and municipal government operations relating to licensing (marriage licenses), permitting, recordation, document-filing services, or as determined by the local government (including but not limited to public foreclosure sales).
- Child-care services
- Youth camps, including all summer camps, and other daytime and overnight camps for youth.
- Recreational sports programs for youths and adults.
- Drive-in-concerts, movies, or movie or similar events, under guidelines that facilitate appropriate social distancing, that generally require spectators to remain in their vehicles, and that minimize in-person contact between people who are not in the same household or vehicle.
- The following establishments must operate with at least six (6) feet of social distancing between workstations: cosmetology salons, hair salons, barber shops, nail salons/shops, and other establishments where licensed cosmetologists or barbers practice their trade; massage establishments and other facilities where licensed massage therapists or other persons; and other personal-care and beauty services such as tanning salons, tattoo studios, piercing studios, hair removal services, and hair loss treatment and growth services.

The order also includes the following directives:

- Every person in the County of Hidalgo shall wear a face covering over the nose and mouth when inside a commercial entity or other building or space open to the public, or when in an outdoor public space; wherever it is not feasible to maintain six feet (6) of physical distancing from another person not in the same household (see order for exemptions).
- ALL persons over the age of 65, are strongly encouraged to stay home as much as possible and maintain appropriate physical distance from any member of the household who has been out of the residence in the last 14 days.

In accordance with Governor Abbott's Executive Order GA-29, following a verbal or written warning for a first-time violation of this face covering, a person's second violation shall be punishable by a fine not to exceed \$250. Each subsequent violation shall be punishable by a fine not to exceed \$250 per violation.

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Attachment: Signed Order and letter from DSHS.

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