



Hidalgo County Commissioners Court

Richard F. Cortez
County Judge

David L. Fuentes
Commissioner, Precinct 1

Eduardo "Eddie" Cantu
Commissioner, Precinct 2

Joe M. Flores
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

Saturday, September 12, 2020

Hidalgo County Judge Richard F. Cortez lifts Shelter at Home Order, adds protections for Winter Texans

EDINBURG – In his capacity as the county’s Emergency Management Director, Hidalgo County Judge Richard F. Cortez has lifted the county’s Shelter at Home order, but implemented new protections for the annual arrival of Winter Texans. The new order goes into effect on Monday, September 14, 2020 at 12:01 a.m. and remains in effect until 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, September 27.

“Although our numbers are trending downward, COVID-19 continues to impact our community and remains a dangerous threat,” said Judge Cortez. “After much consideration, I have decided to lift the Shelter at Home mandate because I recognize the sacrifices made by those who have abided by this order. I also recognize that this restriction has caused some hardship with families.”

Judge Cortez said he will continue the curfew as a tool to keep people, particularly younger people, off the streets during the overnight hours.

“This emergency order also takes into account a unique phenomenon for South Texas that many other parts of the state don’t necessarily contend with: the annual arrival of Winter Texans,” Judge Cortez said. Knowing that many of these annual visitors are retirees and old enough to be part of a population vulnerable to COVID-19, Judge Cortez added some protections – particularly with regard to event organizers and popular gathering spots for Winter Texans.

This includes:

- Event organizers holding events indoors, other than a church ceremony, are limited to fifty percent (50%) of the total listed occupancy of the facility. All patrons must wear a face covering (over nose and mouth) wherever it is not feasible to maintain six feet of physical distancing from another individual not in the same household, and minimum standard health protocols should be followed.
- Hair/Nail salons: standard health protocols; at least 6 feet physical distancing; schedule appointments to limit amount of persons in facilities; sanitize surfaces and equipment between uses.
- Gyms: standard health protocols; at least 6 feet physical distancing; sanitize surfaces and equipment between uses; provide hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, soap and water.

-MORE-

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- Bowling Alleys/Bingo Halls: standard health protocols; at least 6 feet physical distancing; add dividers if social distancing isn't possible; sanitize surfaces and equipment between uses; provide hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, soap and water.
- Weddings/Wedding Venues: held indoors, other than a church ceremony, are limited to fifty percent (50%) of the total listed occupancy of the facility. All patrons must wear a face covering (over nose and mouth) wherever it is not feasible to maintain six feet of physical distancing from another individual not in the same household, and minimum standard health protocols should be followed. Sanitize surfaces and equipment between uses; provide hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, soap and water.
- Movie Theaters: may operate at fifty percent (50%) of the total listed occupancy of the facility. All patrons must wear a face covering (over nose and mouth) wherever it is not feasible to maintain six feet of physical distancing from another individual not in the same household, and minimum standard health protocols should be followed. Maintain at least two seats (or six feet separation) between groups in any row (except that two or more members of the same household, or two individuals who are not members of the same household but who are attending together can sit adjacent to one another, with two seats empty on either side).

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.
- There will be a curfew for all persons aged eighteen (18) and over from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. The only exceptions are for a medical emergency, to provide covered essential services, or any other purpose permitted under this order. All persons seventeen (17) and younger must be accompanied by a parent or guardian when participating in essential activities.
- To the greatest extent possible, all travel during the CURFEW, within the jurisdiction of Hidalgo County, should be limited to obtaining or performing essential covered services. Travel should be limited to no more than two (2) persons per vehicle for persons obtaining essential services, and four (4) persons per vehicle for essential healthcare or government functions.
- Any outdoor gathering of ten (10) or more 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. Outdoor areas or outdoor venues shall operate at no more than fifty percent (50%) as underlined in the order (see order for examples).

-MORE-

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- All commercial covered entities operating within Hidalgo County shall remain at fifty percent (50%) of the total listed occupancy limit. It is highly encouraged and recommended that services be provided by curbside, drive-thru, or take-out.
- All bars and similar establishments that receive more than fifty-one percent (51%) of their gross receipts from the sale of alcoholic beverages MUST remain CLOSED, but may open for delivery and take-out, including alcoholic beverages.
- Bar areas within restaurant establishments must follow Minimum Standard Health Protocols relevant to operations of the business or entity services and must not permit customers to loiter at the bar or in common areas, only provide services to seated individuals in "bar" areas, discouraging activities that enable close physical contact in the "bar" areas.
- Commercial covered entities, including flea markets and farmers markets, must develop and implement "Health and Safety Practices" that require employees and customers to follow additional hygiene measures, including wearing facial coverings over mouth and nose.
- Employers of covered entities should follow Minimum Standard Health Protocols relevant to operations of the business or entity services such as training all employees on appropriate cleaning and disinfection, hand hygiene, and respiratory etiquette, not allow employees with known close contact to a positive for COVID-19 to return to work until the end of a fourteen (14) day self-isolation period, and/or conducting temperature checks or health screenings of employees.

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.

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