

**POLK COUNTY, TEXAS
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Date: March 19, 2020

Time: 5 p.m.

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**Governor Abbott Issues Executive Order In Accordance with Federal
Guidelines to Mitigate Spread of COVID-19 in Texas**

Today, Governor Greg Abbott announced a series of Executive Orders related to COVID-19 preparedness and mitigation. These Orders will be effective on a statewide basis starting at **11:59 PM on March 20, 2020 and will end at 11:59 PM on April 3, 2020**, subject to extension thereafter based on the status of COVID-19 in Texas and the recommendations of the CDC. The orders listed below are included in the Executive Order attached hereto:

Order No. 1: In accordance with the Guidelines from the President and the CDC, every person in Texas shall avoid social gatherings in groups of more than 10 people.

Order No. 2: In accordance with the Guidelines from the President and the CDC, people shall avoid eating and drinking at bars, restaurants, and food courts, or visiting gyms or massage parlors; provided, however, that the use of drive-thru, pick-up, or delivery options is allowed and highly encouraged throughout the limited duration of this Executive Order.

Order No. 3: In accordance with the Guidelines from the President and the CDC, people shall not visit nursing homes or retirement or long-term care facilities unless to provide critical assistance.

Order No. 4: In accordance with the Guidelines from the President and the CDC, schools shall temporarily close.

The Governor's Executive Order does not prohibit people from visiting a variety of places, including grocery stores, gas stations, parks, and banks, so long as the necessary precautions are maintained to reduce the transmission of COVID-19. The Executive Order does not mandate sheltering in place. All critical infrastructure will remain operational, domestic travel will remain unrestricted, and government entities and businesses will continue providing essential services.

For offices and businesses that remain open, employees should practice good hygiene and, where feasible, work from home in order to achieve optimum isolation from COVID-19. According to Governor Abbott, the more that people reduce their public contact, the sooner COVID-19 will be contained and the sooner this Executive Order will expire.

Please be mindful that, if cases occur in Polk County and should this pandemic continue to escalate state and nationwide, protective actions and recommendations may change. Changes to protective actions will be issued to the public via local media and will be posted to the County and OEM websites and Facebook pages.

The CDC has updated their guidance for cruise ship travelers. Cruise ship travelers should stay home for 14 days after returning from travel, monitor their health, and practice social distancing.

Until the Governor's Executive Order takes effect tomorrow at 11:59 p.m., please follow the President's and the CDC's guidance to avoid unnecessary gatherings, discretionary travel, shopping trips, and social visits. Local places of assembly (where people gather) are encouraged to not to have gatherings of more than 10 people with a social distance of 3-6 feet between each person.

Please do not panic. Please be mindful that when you panic you may cause others to panic as well. It's good to stock up on some necessary household items, but hoarding or over shopping is not necessary.

Facebook is a great tool for sharing information. Unfortunately, Facebook is also a great place for spreading false rumors. It is important to get your information from reliable sources.

Preventative measures Polk County has taken in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Polk County Judge Sydney Murphy, the City of Onalaska, and the City of Corrigan have declared a Local State of Disaster for a Public Health Emergency due to the COVID-19.

At this time, there are 143 cases of COVID-19 in Texas and three deaths. According to the Angelina County & Cities Health District, there are no reported cases of COVID-19 in Polk County. A list of helpful websites and links to view current COVID-19 case counts in Texas and Polk County can be found at the end of this update.

The County will remain open and operational at this time. We follow the guidance of our Public Health Authorities and will make decisions based on their recommendations.

Polk County has put the following preventive measures in place to protect the health of Polk County residents:

1. Communicated CDC Guidance for COVID-19 to the general public, travelers, local healthcare professionals, nursing homes, long-term care facilities, adult day cares, first responders, schools, and businesses.

2. Requested that the public to practice good hygiene and common sense to protect their own health such as: covering coughs, washing hands, cleaning frequently touched objects and surfaces, maintaining a social distance of 3-6 feet, avoiding people who are sick, and staying home when you are sick.

3. Requested that the public call ahead to their healthcare providers before seeking medical attention if they suspect that they have been exposed to COVID-19.

4. Informed the public that the medical community is working with public health to make sure that anyone that meets the Texas Department of State Health Services COVID-19 testing criteria will be evaluated for testing.

Closures or Changes in Operation

1. The Polk County Justice of the Peace, Precinct #4 has canceled jury trials scheduled for Thursday, March 26th. Do not report for jury duty.

2. The Polk County Districts Courts canceled jury duty trials scheduled for Monday, March 30th. Do not report for jury duty.

3. Polk County Senior Centers in Livingston, Onalaska, and Corrigan have closed until further notice. The Polk County Department of Aging will have meals ready for pickup at each center for seniors currently enrolled in the seniors program to take home. Meals-on-Wheels deliveries will continue as normal.

4. The Veterans Services Office is open by appointment only until further notice. For appointments, please call their office at (936) 327-6838.

5. County-owned rental facilities to include Dunbar Gym and the Polk County Commerce Center are closed until further notice.

6. **Commissioners Court:** Seating in the Commissioners Courtroom will be limited to essential personnel. Commissioners Court proceedings will be live-streamed on the Polk County Commissioners Court YouTube channel. We ask that public comments be limited to essential items only while the Declaration of Local Disaster for Public Health Emergency in Polk County remains in place. Members of the public wishing to comment may be allowed to enter the courtroom to address the Court one at a time while keeping a safe social distance of at least 3-6 feet from all other persons as much as possible.

7. Effective March 23rd, the Polk Central Appraisal District's lobby will be closed until further notice. Information on how people can conduct business with them will be posted on their website and in the Enterprise.

Businesses, please review your Continuity of Operations Plans and follow the guidance for Businesses and Employers on the CDC website at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html>.

Sources for COVID-19 Information

For COVID-19 case counts in Texas: <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/news/updates.shtm#coronavirus>

For COVID-19 case counts in Polk County: <https://www.acchd.us/health-concerns/covid-19/>

Texas DSHS information on COVID-19: www.dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus

CDC Information on COVID-19: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

CDC's COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions page: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html>.

Please look for further updates on the Polk County Emergency Management Facebook page (www.facebook.com/PolkCountyEmergencyManagement) or on our website at www.PolkCountyOEM.com.

Updates can also be found on the Polk County, Texas website at www.co.polk.tx.us or on the Polk County, Texas Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/PolkCountyTexas/>.