



Hon. Mike DeLoach

Lamb County Judge
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Office of the County Judge

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

On Monday, April 27, Governor Greg Abbott announced his plan to reopen Texas. Monday's press conference, and release of Executive Order GA-18, signaled the first big step towards a return to normal. GA-18 sets out "Phase 1" of the Governor's plan by permitting certain businesses, which had previously been ordered to cease normal operation, the option to begin reopening. This phase is slated to last until at least May 15, according to GA-18.

Beginning Friday, May 1, restaurants and retail stores across the state may open at a limited-capacity status. This means these businesses may open to the public and operate at 25% capacity of the total listed occupancy for that restaurant or retail establishment. The Governor's plan also made specific provision for rural counties such as ours to increase capacity in restaurants and retail businesses to 50%, providing certain standards have been met.

County Judge Mike DeLoach has worked to ensure Lamb County qualifies for the increase in capacity. "This is an important step for our local business owners, and for the municipalities and citizens in our County. The Governor's plan is a safe way for us to begin to allow pockets of our local economy to recover, while still keeping the public safe."

What this will look like is a shift from restaurants and retail stores being totally closed to the public, to now being able to admit limited numbers of shoppers/guests. "Business owners will now have the option, based on what they are comfortable with, to open to the public at either 50% or 25% of their approved occupancy, starting May 1st," DeLoach says. "Customers will also have a choice. If they want to continue to order ahead and pick up to-go, or utilize delivery options, that is still available and encouraged, depending on what the businesses continue to offer."

Aside from our county's size, the other factor qualifying us to increase business capacity at this time is the low number of positive cases. As of today's date, Lamb County has one active, positive case, and that person is quarantined. More information about case reporting across the state and data on the numbers of tests being administered may be found at <https://dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/default.aspx>, by accessing the "COVID-19 case dashboard."

The Judge also urged everyone to familiarize themselves with the Minimum Standard Health Protocols issued by the Governor's Report to Open Texas. "As the Governor acknowledged, we have worked hard to slow and stop the spread of this virus, and that hard work has paid off. Going forward, we must keep up the strategies that have helped us make it this far, and follow those practices to support a safe and measured reopening of our State and County."

DeLoach and his office are making the Open Texas Checklists provided by the Governor's Report available to local employers, retailers, and restaurants, to ensure proper implementation of Health Protocols prior to these places opening their doors to the public. Those checklists will be available on the County's website, at <http://www.co.lamb.tx.us/>. They can also be found at <https://gov.texas.gov/organization/opentexas>, under the "Open Texas Checklists" heading.

Primary Health Protocols issued by DSHS and the Governor include:

- Maintaining 6' distance from other individuals not within the same household. If distancing is not feasible, other measures should be utilized (face covering, hand hygiene, cough etiquette, cleanliness, and sanitation);
- Self-screening before going into a public place, looking for new or worsening signs or symptoms of possible infection;
- Washing/disinfecting hands upon entering a retailer/business/public place, and again after any interaction with other persons or items in those places; and
- Minimizing or eliminating physical contact with persons not within the same household.

A complete list of the Protocols can be found at <https://dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/opentexas.aspx>. The Centers for Disease Control Guidelines can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>.

Everyone should continue to be on the lookout for signs and symptoms of the virus, which include:

- Cough, shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing;
- Chills or repeated shaking with chills;
- Muscle pain, headache, or sore throat;
- Loss of taste or smell;
- Diarrhea;
- Feeling feverish or having a measured temperature greater than or equal to 100.00 degrees Fahrenheit; or
- Known close contact with a person who is lab confirmed to have COVID-19.

For information regarding symptoms, help deciding whether you should be tested, and to learn where you can go to be tested, visit www.texas.gov/covid19/. That website also gives citizens the ability to search an interactive map which shows the nearest testing location's hours, and directions.

Governor Abbot's reopening plan also included provisions to significantly increase the number of COVID-19 tests administered daily, to ensure an accurate accounting is being made of positive cases. Judge DeLoach echoed the sentiments of the Governor by reminding the public, priority should be given to testing those who are symptomatic, and to those who are high-risk (such as nursing home residents and healthcare/front-line workers).

DeLoach reminds Lamb County citizens there are protocols in place to ensure compliance with State rules and regulations, and CDC guidelines. "We have procedures in place and have and will continue to activate them if or when a resident of Lamb County becomes COVID-19 positive. The public should rest assured that while we certainly never wanted to be in the position to activate all these plans, we have prepared for, have, and will continue to respond to safely meet the needs of our citizens."

According to GA-18, stricter restrictions may be re-applied by the Governor, should monitoring and testing reveal a resurgence in spread of the virus. The Governor's new Order still explicitly prohibits the reopening of other businesses at this time: bars, gyms, public swimming pools, bowling alleys and video arcades, tattoo studios, piercing studios, and cosmetology salons. Similarly, people are still prohibited from social visits to nursing homes, state supported living centers, assisted living facilities, or long-term care facilities.

"I've said many times, as did one of the Governor's advisors in Monday's press conference, that this is not a situation where a 'flipping of the switch' to go back to life before the virus is appropriate. But this is a cautious step in the right direction, and I trust that our citizens and businesses will treat it as such," said DeLoach, who closed by thanking Lamb County for everything its citizens have done to get to this point. "This has been a trying time, and we aren't out of the woods yet. But I have seen so many people, so many businesses and groups from our communities come together to help each other, thinking outside of the box, uniting in the way the people of West Texas do best, to get through this."