



Hon. James M. DeLoach  
Lamb County Judge  
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Littlefield, Texas 79339

**Office of the County Judge**  
Monday, July 06, 2020

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

On Thursday, July 2<sup>nd</sup>, Governor Greg Abbott issued Executive Order GA-29, outlining additional measures he feels are appropriate to try to slow the spread of COVID-19. Many members of our public have concerns and questions surrounding what the new Order means for us, and how it will affect the lives of citizens in Lamb County. The portions of this Order (as well as the one that immediately preceded it, issued June 26<sup>th</sup>, GA-28) which can change how we have been operating are addressed in turn below.

**Operating Capacity**

As of June 29<sup>th</sup>, all business establishments must operate at no more than 50 percent of the total listed occupancy of the establishment. This is a reduction from the 75 percent standard at which businesses had been operating since the June 2<sup>nd</sup> Executive Order (GA-26) implemented Phase III of the Reopen Texas plan.

No occupancy limit applies to religious services, local governmental operations, child-care services, youth camps, or recreational sports programs. For cosmetology salons, hair salons, barber shops, nail salons/shops, and other personal-care and beauty services, the 50 percent occupancy limit does not apply, so long as operators and patrons maintain at least six feet of social distancing between work stations.

**Gathering Limitations**

Initially, GA-28 suggested Texans "should not be in groups larger than ten and should maintain six feet of social distancing from those not in their group." It further required groups/gatherings of 100 persons or more to obtain permission from the County Judge or Mayor of the municipality in which the gathering would take place.

Effective at noon, July 3<sup>rd</sup>, however, outdoor gatherings in excess of 10 people are prohibited unless the Mayor of the city in which the gathering is held, or the County Judge in the case of a gathering outside of an incorporated area, approves of the gathering. The Order also declared that people "shall not" be in groups larger than 10, and "shall" maintain six feet of social distance from those not in their group.

GA-29 still excepts religious services, local governmental operations, child-care services, youth camps, and recreational sports programs from gathering size restrictions, so those types of gatherings may continue as they were prior to the Order.

Any members of the public who want to apply for permission from the Judge's Office to hold a gathering should submit all requests in writing to the Judge's office, no later than seven days prior to the event. Each request must include a plan for social distancing, and must also address provision for face coverings, if social distancing cannot be maintained. Each gathering must also have hand sanitizer available for attendees.

**Face Masks**

In GA-29, Governor Abbott says that in his view, "wearing face coverings is one of the most important and effective tools for reducing the spread of COVID-19." He believes the use of face coverings "is a targeted response" that can "combat the threat to public health using the least restrictive means."

The Order requires face coverings be worn by every Texan when inside a commercial entity/building or space open to the public, or when in an outdoor public space, **“wherever it is not feasible to maintain six feet of social distancing from another person not in the same household.”**

There are ten individual exceptions to the “mask requirement”—if at least one of the following conditions is met, a face covering is not required for persons who are in a public space **and** are:

1. Under 10 years of age;
2. Diagnosed with medical conditions/disabilities that prevent the wearing of a face covering;
3. Consuming food/drink, or who are seated at a restaurant to eat/drink;
4. In a vehicle alone or with passengers who are members of the same household;
5. Obtaining services that require visual observation of the face;
6. In a swimming pool/lake/similar body of water;
7. Voting, assisting a voter, serving as a poll watcher, or actively administering an election;
8. Actively providing or obtaining access to religious worship; or
9. Giving a speech for a broadcast or to an audience.

The last exception applies to counties with fewer than 20 **active** cases of COVID-19, and whose County Judge has affirmatively opted-out of the face covering requirement by filing an attestation form with the Texas Department of Emergency Management (TDEM). On Thursday, July 2<sup>nd</sup>, Judge DeLoach filed the required Attestation Form with TDEM; as of Monday morning, July 6<sup>th</sup>, Lamb County is listed as exempt from the requirements of GA-29 on the TDEM website (<https://tdem.texas.gov/ga29>).

As a reminder, the Judge’s Office updates the County’s website with the number of currently active, confirmed cases each day. The number of active cases is the measure by which most of the restrictions and exemptions are measured—**not** the total number of cases the County has had during the pandemic. This information can be found at [www.co.lamb.tx.us](http://www.co.lamb.tx.us).

More than anything, Judge DeLoach wants citizens of Lamb County to maintain individual ability to make their own responsible choices: “I fully expect that, as it has done up to this point, our number of active cases will continue to ebb and flow. Lamb County residents have done an excellent job of implementing safe practices and using their God-given common sense to protect themselves and each other. While the Governor is taking extra steps to ensure *all* Texans are doing the same, I do not think we need to drastically alter what we have been doing here.” He continued, “The face covering requirement only comes into play when people are in public spaces and cannot maintain social distancing.”

Of course, the Judge reminds the public if they are ordered to quarantine or implement other practices by the Department of State Health Services or their medical provider, he expects them to comply.

As a reminder to the public, businesses and other public spaces do have the ability under the Order to implement requirements that patrons don face coverings, whether the County is exempt or not. “I trust each business owner to make responsible choices and reasonable requests of its patrons. And I also hope patrons and customers of these businesses understand and appreciate everyone is trying to do their best to keep each other safe—we need to be able to keep people at work and keep our local economy moving.” While face covering requirements might be inconvenient or unwelcome, the Judge recognizes that for certain persons and populations, wearing a face covering is a way to ensure safe contact with others; he encourages people who feel safer wearing them to continue to do so.

“Ultimately, we are all free people who have the ability to choose how we will react to this situation—just like all situations we find ourselves in every day. I trust the great citizens of our County to continue to work together to keep each other safe.”