



PRESS RELEASE

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Health Officer Supersedes and Loosens Shelter-in-Place Order Due to Initial Successes Interrupting Community Transmission of COVID-19

SANTA ROSA, CA - The Health Officer has issued a new Shelter-in-Place Health Order, which among other changes, reduces restrictions in a number of important employment areas including construction, landscaping services, nurseries, car and bicycle sales.

This loosening of restrictions is possible because of the significant interruption of community transmission of the virus due to compliance with the Order in Sonoma County. Sheltering-in-Place has worked to save lives and maintain health care system capacity.

Like the Governor's Executive Order (N-33-20), this Order, which becomes effective at 12:01 a.m. on May 4, 2020, does not have a specific end date. That is so the County can respond and make modifications as necessary (either loosening or tightening restrictions) as changes in the data and state orders may dictate.

"We have made important progress in our fight against the virus. Opening the County up further is contingent upon our ability to keep up our efforts and reach critical milestones," said Health Officer, Dr. Sundari Mase. "Our latest data shows staying at home prevented community spread of the virus. It is important that we now work to scale up testing and contact tracing to limit the spread of COVID-19 and keep people safe."

"We all are eager to open up more businesses. To be successful we must be deliberate in how we open up our economy, while working to protect the safety of everyone involved," Board of Supervisors Chair Susan Gorin commented on the new Order. "This involves extensive planning, which we have begun doing with our local businesses."

The Order eases restrictions on construction businesses, allowing all new construction, and all construction work on unoccupied structures. For occupied structures, exterior work is allowed, but interior work is only permitted if necessary for the safety, sanitation, and habitability of the structure. Under the Order a construction business must maintain strict compliance with construction site-specific field safety requirements. Examples of construction site-specific requirements include daily health screening for arriving staff, establishing cleaning and decontamination protocols, and designation of a safety officer.

The Order also eases restrictions on real estate/rental viewing if there is strict compliance with sector specific social distancing and hygiene requirements.

Furthermore, the Order eases restrictions for the following essential outdoor businesses where transmission risk is lower, including: arborists, landscaping, gardening, pool maintenance, plant nurseries, and environmental site remediation services. The Order also clarifies that florists are considered essential agriculture and that their retail sales can occur only via curbside, delivery, or shipping.

Additionally, golfing is allowed as a recreational outdoor activity, and players, golf courses, and golf driving ranges are subject to strict golf safety requirements; owners and operators must provide security or patrolling, and will be responsible for ensuring golfers comply with these requirements.

Automobile dealerships and bicycle shops can operate for retail sales, however they will have to maintain required social distancing protocols for staff and customers.

The Order's provision regarding minimum basic operations allowed for non-essential businesses remains unchanged. Those non-essential businesses may continue to sell existing inventory for delivery or shipping, but not curbside pickup.

Lastly, the Order addresses faith-based services organizations, allowing them to offer food, shelter, and social services, and other necessities of life for economically disadvantaged or otherwise needy individuals, and to provide counseling and host religious services through virtual streaming or similar technology.

The Order states that the Health Officer does not expect to permit private or public mass gatherings in the immediate future and the Health Officer will be continuing to assess whether mass gatherings are appropriate based upon infection rate and data related to the State's critical reopening indicators.

This Order represents an important step along the road to recovery while we closely follow the data and the success of mitigation strategies to make adjustments as needed.

To move the County further down the road to recovery, the Health Officer will also be working with the County Economic Development Board (EDB) and industry leaders to develop specific COVID-19 mitigation measures to facilitate re-openings for all other businesses. Providing mitigation measure guidance to the community, including the ability for businesses to implement them, is a component to move to phase two of the Governor's Resilience Roadmap issued on April 28, 2020.

"We are optimistic that the Governor is looking at relaxing some of the restrictions that have closed businesses these past six weeks. We are in the process of assembling a Reopening Task Force in partnership with local chambers, industry groups, and economic development partners so businesses may come together and develop industry-specific COVID-19 mitigation solutions that will allow them to open as soon as they are allowed,"

said Sheba Person-Whitley, Executive Director, EDB. “We understand there is an urgent need for this, and are preparing an unprecedented effort to complete this task together over the next week.”

Visit SoCoEmergency.org to read the full Shelter in Place Health Order and frequently asked questions that have been developed to clarify this order. Find latest updates regarding the coronavirus emergency, local resources, and other helpful information at this site. Community members may also call 2-1-1 or text their zip code to 898-211 in order to text with a 2-1-1 operator.

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