

# CITY OF LAREDO/STATE OF TEXAS COVID-19 TIMELINE

## **March-***Local & State Governments issue lockdown orders as cases spread throughout the U.S.*

- **March 13**, Governor Greg Abbott declared a state of disaster for all 254 Texas counties. Throughout the following week, several local officials began issuing orders limiting public gatherings and instructing the public to stay at home. He also granted AG's request for suspension of certain open meeting statutes. The temporary suspension allows, among other things, for telephonic or videoconference meetings of governmental bodies that are accessible to the public in an effort to reduce in-person meetings that assemble large groups of people. The March 13 declaration is extended for successive 30-day periods.
- **March 13**, City Council holds an Emergency meeting and suspends all City events for 30 days and closes public libraries, recreation centers, and senior citizens centers through March 22, 2020.
- **March 16**, a Declaration of a Local Disaster was issued by Mayor Pete Saenz for the City of Laredo to take steps to prepare for, respond to, and mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in the community.
- **March 17**, City Council holds its first Special Meeting regarding COVID-19 and requires non-essential businesses to close to the public, limits gatherings to 10 persons or less, cancels City boards until further notice, closes non-essential City facilities, including parks, libraries, and recreation centers, to the public, and prohibits dine-in services at restaurants.
- **March 19**, Abbott signed his first coronavirus-related executive order (GA-08) that signaled the start of the state's lockdown with a prohibition on social gatherings of more than 10 and mandated the closure of dine-in restaurants, nursing homes, and schools.
- **March 31**, City of Laredo issued and directed non-essential businesses to close and directed residents to remain in their homes in the "Stay Home, Work Safe" emergency orders. The order directed residents to shelter at home with the exception of crucial errands and job duties.

## **April-***Cases in Texas remain steady as the lockdown continues.*

- **April 3**, **Laredo, becomes first U.S. city to require face covering and imposed a \$1,000 fine against violators.**
- **April 27**, Abbott issues executive order that announced plans for "Phase I" of reopening to begin on May 1. Under his executive order to begin reopening, Abbott stated that, "Individuals are encouraged to wear appropriate face coverings, but no jurisdiction can impose a civil or criminal penalty for failure to wear a face covering."

## **May-***Texas begins its first phases of reopening without any spike in cases.*

- **May 1**, Texas began the first phase of Abbott's reopening plan, which ordered that retail stores and dine-in restaurants could resume operations, but must be limited to 25 percent of the maximum capacity.
- **May 6**, City of Laredo Parks reopens certain sections to the public including sports fields, tennis courts, dog parks, and walking trails.
- **May 8**, Abbott allowed salons to reopen
- **May 18**, Abbott allowed gyms, massage parlors, and tattoo studios to reopen.
- **May 22**, Abbott permitted office buildings, bars, bowling alleys, and bingo halls to reopen at 25 percent capacity, and restaurants to expand to 50 percent capacity.
- **May 26**, City of Laredo requires that City pools and recreation centers remain closed to the public for the rest of the summer.

## **June-** *Abbott scales back reopening as COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations rise*

- **June 3**, Abbott announced his Phase III plan of reopening, which permitted businesses and bars to expand to 50 percent capacity on June 3. The order also permitted restaurants to expand to 75 percent beginning on June 12.
- **June 17**, the Governor reversed his position slightly by allowing local governments to impose fines on businesses that did not require face masks. City of Laredo requires all commercial entities to have a “Health and Safety Policy” in place that requires all employees and customers to wear facial coverings, failure to comply by businesses could lead to a fine of up to \$1,000.
- **June 26**, due to increase in cases, Abbott renewed his lockdown orders, limiting restaurant capacity to 50 percent and closing down bars.
- **June 28**, City’s “Health and Safety Policy” requires amusement redemption centers and bingo halls to provide City with contact tracing logs and limits their hours of operation from 8:00AM to 10:00PM.
- **June 30**, City files a lawsuit against bar business operating in violation of Governor’s Executive Order and City’s Emergency Order. Business agreed to remain closed in accordance with the Governor’s Order.

## **July-** *Abbott issues a statewide mask mandate*

- **July 2**, Abbott took his sanction of mask mandates a step further and issued a statewide mask mandate that made individuals liable for fines. He also banned outdoor gatherings of more than 10 people, but gave mayors the authority to approve these gatherings with reasonable conditions. As a result, the City established an Outdoor Gathering Permit Application to be reviewed by health officials prior to consideration by Mayor.
- **July 14**, Emergency Orders were entered by City Council that sought to close down restaurant dining rooms, bingos, maquilinas, and adult businesses as well as to ban social gatherings outside of members of households. Since the City’s proposed Order superseded the existing state order, Council also directed staff to draft/send to the Governor a Resolution asking for approval of said measures prior to enforcement.
- **July 15**, City files ten lawsuits against various maquilinas establishments after a task force was created by the Laredo Police Department who noticed multiple violations of the City’s Emergency Order.
- **July 31**, the Mayor, the City Manager, the Local Health Authority and EMC, met with state officials via teleconference, including Governor Abbott and TDEM Chief Nim Kid, to inform them of the medical issues plaguing the community amid the surge of COVID positives, and to ask for approval of the July 14<sup>th</sup> Order. Ultimately, the Governor denied the City’s request and asked the City to use only those authorities already granted.

## **September** –*Executive Order 30 increases Occupancy based on Hospitalization Rate*

- **September 17**, Executive Order GA-30 issued by governor allowing in-store retail establishments, dine-in restaurants, office buildings, manufacturers, libraries, and gyms to increase occupancy limits to 75% so long as they are not in an area with a high hospitalization ration.

## **October** –*Current Executive Order 32 issued basing Occupancy on Hospitalization Rate*

- **October 7**, Executive order GA-32 was issued by the governor allowing most facilities (not including bars, which are subject to additional restrictions) to reopen at 75% capacity, unless they

are located in a Trauma Service Area with high COVID-19 hospitalizations (seven consecutive days in which the number of COVID-19 hospitalized patients as a percentage of total hospital capacity exceeds 15 percent). In this case, they are to scale back to 50% except bars which must close unless they hold a TABC food vendor permit.

- **October 20**, City Council reopens sports fields to youth/adult soccer, baseball/softball leagues.

### **November-Governor Declares no More Shutdown in Texas despite rise in Hospitalizations**

- **November 2**, Bars in Laredo are reopened at 50% capacity after County Judge sends an application to TABC following the City's hospitalization rate remaining under 15% for two weeks.
- **November 19**, Governor announced that there would be no more shutdowns, and stated that some local officials haven't adequately enforced the protocols spelled out in the governor's recent executive order.
- **November 23**, Bars are required to close and businesses must scale back to 50% capacity due to City's hospitalization rate exceeding 15% for seven consecutive days.

### **December - City's Hospitalization rate increases**

- **December 2**, Based on Mayor's conversation with Governor's Chief of Staff Luis Saenz, and Assistant City Manager's discussion with the AG's Chief of the General Counsel Division, the State approved the City's curfew restriction for social activities only outside a business between 10:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. This essentially means that you cannot be at someone else's house 'socializing' between these hours. However, you may still engage in any other lawful activity at a business or alone (such as exercising outside).
- **December 14**, City buildings are closed to the public and available only on an appointment basis and City implements a Temporary Telework Program to reduce the amount of workers in City offices. Emergency Order amended to require all City Council meetings and other City boards, commissions, and committees to conduct meetings remotely via virtual video conferencing. Additionally, City Parks sports fields which were open to youth and adult sports leagues were closed once again.
- **December 30**, Contact tracing logs required for all dine-in restaurants open on December 31, 2020 and January 1, 2021 if they were to be open to the public after 10:00 p.m.

### **January-Other Cities attempts to close/issue Restaurant Curfew are Struck down by State's highest Courts**

- **January 2**, The Texas Supreme Court blocked enforcement of local orders in Austin and surrounding Travis County that established an overnight curfew. It found that the Austin orders clearly violated the governor's Executive Order No. 32. The Court agreed with Paxton that "Local authorities have no authority to override and cannot stand in conflict with the governor's clear order."
- **January 3**, In light of the Texas Supreme Court's Order against the City of Austin and Travis County, and the amended pleadings filed against the County of El Paso by the Texas Attorney General, El Paso rescinded its order closing restaurants at 10 p.m. for dine-in services.
- **January 17**, City of Laredo Police Department implements an undercover task force to visit restaurants and bars allowed to reopen as restaurants to document violations of the Governor's Executive Order and the City's Emergency Order. The City will be filing temporary restraining order against businesses that have failed to comply with all COVID-19 requirements.