



CITY OF LAREDO

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Release Date: March 27, 2020



UPDATE: This document has been updated to incorporate changes to the Laredo City Council Emergency Ordinance that were superseded by a Stay at Home/Work Safe Order issued on March 27, 2020 by the Mayor of the City of Laredo Pete Saenz.

FACTS

1. What actions were taken by City Officials and the Governor of Texas?

In response to concerns over the spread of COVID-19, the Laredo City Council passed an Emergency Ordinance on March 18, 2020 in an effort to help contain the spread of the Coronavirus or COVID-19 within our community which included extraordinary measures to restrict movement, occupancy, and operations throughout the City. The following day, Governor Greg Abbott issued a parallel Executive Order relating to preparedness and mitigation in accordance with federal guidelines issued by the President and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to stop the spread of COVID-19. Additionally, on March 26, 2020 in an effort to further stop the spread of COVID-19, the Mayor of the City of Laredo signed Emergency Order #3, **Stay at Home/Work Safe Order**, which orders all persons located within the City of Laredo to stay at home and only leave for Essential Activities.

2. When does it go into effect and how long does it last?

The **Stay at Home/Work Safe Order** goes into effect at **12:00AM on March 28, 2020** and will continue until **11:59PM on April 3, 2020**, *unless amended or suspended by future Council action.*

3. What authority does a mayor or city council have during a declared state of disaster to protect the public health?

A city may activate its emergency management powers by declaring a state of local disaster under Chapter 418 of the Government Code. Thereafter, the governing body of a municipality may enforce *any law that is reasonably necessary to protect the public health*. A home rule city may also adopt rules to protect the health of persons in the city, including quarantine rules to protect the residents against communicable disease.

4. Is it mandatory or is it just guidance?

This **Stay at Home/Work Safe** order is a legal Order that must be followed by all persons located within the City of Laredo, Texas. Failure to comply with this **Stay at Home/Work Safe Order** shall be a criminal offense punishable by fine that does not exceed \$1,000.00 or confinement in jail for a term not to exceed 180 days, or both fine and confinement. See Section 10 of **Stay at Home/Work Safe Order**.

5. Am I allowed to leave my home while this Stay at Home/Work Safe Order is in effect?

The intent of this **Stay at Home/Work Safe Order** is to ensure that people remain in their Residences and minimize social interactions outside of their immediate family unit. However, you may leave your Residence for reasons specified in the **Stay at Home/Work Safe Order**. These “Essential Activities” include ensuring the health and safety of yourself and your family, engaging in outdoor activity that does not involve close contact with other people, obtaining services and supplies for yourself and your family, and performing employment functions that are permissible under the Stay at Home/Work Safe Order.

6. Am I allowed to travel while this Stay at Home/Stay Work Safe Order is in effect?

All travel is prohibited unless you are engaging in an “Essential Activity” or performing or obtaining services from an “Essential Business”. Examples of Essential Travel include, but are not limited to:

- Any travel related to Essential Activities, Healthcare Operations, essential Governmental Functions, Essential Critical Infrastructure, and Essential Businesses.
- Travel to care for elderly, minors, dependents, persons with disabilities, or other vulnerable persons.
- Travel to or from educational institutions for purposes of receiving materials for distance learning or for receiving meals, and any other related services.
- Travel outside of the jurisdiction is allowed if engaging in an “Essential Activity” or performing or obtaining services from an “Essential Business”.
- Travel to return to a place of residence from outside the jurisdiction.

7. Is there a curfew?

A curfew is in place from 10:00PM to 6:00AM only for individuals aged 17 and under but please remember that travel is prohibited for everyone at all times unless engaging in “Essential Travel”.

8. What is an “Essential Activity”?

“Essential Activity” means engaging in activities or performing tasks that are deemed essential to your wellbeing and that of the community. Essential Activities include, but are not limited to activities such as:

- Activities or tasks essential to the health and safety of you and your family or household members, including your pets.
- Obtaining food, household goods, and supplies to work from home
- Engaging in limited outdoor activity such as walking, running, or hiking, as long as social distancing requirements are followed.
- Working for or going to an “Essential Business”
- Caring for a family member or pet in another household

9. What business offices and stores must close under this emergency Order?

All businesses operating within the City of Laredo that are **not** considered **Essential Businesses** are **required to close**. Business establishments that must close include, but are not limited to:

- Bars, lounges and private clubs
- Fitness Centers, Gyms, Yoga Studios and all other place where people go for purposes of engaging in any form of physical exercise.
- Bingos and Amusement Redemption Centers
- Reception Halls and Party Rental Places
- Enclosed Malls
- Entertainment facilities such as bowling alleys, movie theaters, etc.
- Massage Parlors
- Food Courts
- Barber shops, hair and nail salons, estheticians, and related personal care businesses
- Tattoos and piercing parlors and tanning salons

However, you can go to work to conduct “Minimum Basic Operations” including conducting inventory, ensuring security, processing payroll and employee benefits or for related functions.

10. If I own a retail store may I continue operations for curbside and deliveries?

Yes, although a retail store may be considered non-essential, you may continue operations for online and telephonic orders for home delivery and curbside services provided that you use protective gear like face masks, etc.

11. What are “Essential Businesses”?

“Essential Businesses” including, but not limited to the following:

- Grocery stores
- Gas stations
- Banks
- Government Entities and businesses that provide essential services
- Hardware (Home Depot, Lowe’s, Dr. Ike’s, McCoy’s, etc.)

- Healthcare operations
- Hotels and Motels (Except restaurants dine in areas locate therein)

“Essential Business” may stay open and their employees may leave their place of residence to go to work. The **Stay at Home/Work Safe Order** includes the following list of Essential Businesses:

- Healthcare Operations, Essential Critical Infrastructure and Essential Government Functions
- Grocery stores, liquor stores, supermarkets, big-box stores that provide essential supplies or services, food banks, gas stations, convenience stores, and farmers’ markets that sell food products
- Food cultivation, including family, fishing, and livestock
- Restaurants that prepare and serve food, but only for delivery or carry out
- Businesses that ship or deliver groceries, food, goods, or services directly to residences
- Banks, credit unions, appraisers, title companies
- Newspapers, television, radio, and other media services
- Childcare facilities
- Education institutions for the purposes of facilitating distance learning or providing food or meals
- Hotels and motels
- Laundromats, dry cleaners, and laundry service providers
- Auto-supply, auto and bicycle repair, auto-maintenance, automobile dealerships, gas stations
- Hardware stores
- Trash and recycling collection, processing and disposal
- Business providing mailing and shipping services
- Cleaning, maintenance, and security for building facilities
- Plumbers, electricians, roofers, exterminators, air conditioner repair, appliance repair, and equipment repair providers that are necessary to maintaining the safety, sanitation, and essential operations of residences and Essential Businesses
- Funeral homes, crematoriums, cemeteries, and burial services, provided that Social Distancing Requirements are maintained to the greatest extent possible
- Professional services including real estate, insurance, legal, and accounting services that are necessary to assist in compliance with legally mandated activities
- Businesses that supply other Essential Businesses with support or supplies needed to operate
- Public works, residential, and commercial constructions
- Home-based care for seniors, adults, or children
- Residential facilities for seniors, adults, children and animals
- Water, sewer, gas, electrical, oil and gas/industry facilities
- Businesses that supply products needed for people to work from home
- Airlines, taxis, and other private transportation providers providing transportation services for necessary Essential Activities, Critical Infrastructure, Essential Government Functions and Essential Travel
- Moving supply services

- Businesses that provide Information Technology (IT) services
- Businesses that provide shelter, social services and other necessities of life for economically disadvantaged or otherwise needy individuals

12. Can I go to a Convenience Store at any hour?

Yes, however you must maintain social distancing of 6 feet and no more than 10 people may in the store at the same time.

13. Can I stay open if I own a firearm and ammunition retail store?

Yes as long as no more than 10 people are present in a single space, including employees and customers, and social distancing of 6 feet is maintained.

14. How does this affect places of employment?

You may still go to work if you work in an “Essential Business” or “Essential Critical Infrastructure”. However, safety protocols should be in place for all places of employment, such as maintaining social distancing of 6 feet and hand sanitizers and temperature measuring stations to ensure employees do not become vectors of COVID-19. It is also recommended that businesses consider flexible shift plans, having employees telecommute whenever possible.

15. How does this affect nursing homes?

People shall not visit nursing homes, retirement homes, or long-term care facilities.

16. How does this affect adult day care facilities?

Adult day care facilities may continue to operate so long as they comply with the Texas Health and Human Services Commission *Guidance on COVID 19 Response in DAHS Facilities*. (<https://apps.hhs.texas.gov/providers/communications/2020/letters/PL2020-14.pdf>)

17. How does this affect child day care facilities?

Child day care facilities may continue to operate but only if 10 or more people, including employees and children, are not present in a single room at the same time. If a daycare center has multiple rooms, it may only have 10 people per room at the same time. Additionally, childcare must be carried out in “stable groups,” meaning that the same 10 individuals, including staff and children, must remain the same group and room each day. Children and staff cannot change from one group to another on a daily basis and groups of staff and children cannot mix with one another in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

18. Can I hire someone engaged in a critical trade to make discretionary home improvements while this order is in effect?

No. While those who are employed in a critical trade are considered an Essential Business and may continue to work while the order is in effect, they may not provide services that include discretionary maintenance or improvements.

19. Are restaurants affected?

Yes. All restaurants must close their inside and/or outside dining area, but may remain open to provide take-out, delivery or drive-thru menu options.

20. Can I leave home to care for my elderly parents or friends who require assistance to care for themselves, or a friend or family member who has disabilities?

Yes but this activity should be limited to essential care only. Please follow all health and safety guidelines such as washing hands, using hand sanitizer, maintaining at least six feet of distance when possible and coughing or sneezing into a tissue.

21. Can I leave home to visit friends or family members if there is no urgent need?

No, this is not an “Essential Activity”. For your safety and the safety of the community, we need to help each other fight the spread of COVID-19 by staying at home.

22. Can I have elective, medical, surgical or dental procedures?

No.

23. Am I allowed to have a garage sale?

No, and the City of Laredo Building Services Department will not be issuing garage sale or vendor permits while this order is in effect.

24. What if my business IS NOT considered an Essential Business?

Your employees can work from home if their jobs are such that they can be performed remotely. Non-essential businesses may still conduct “Minimum Basic Operations” which include inventory, ensuring security, processing payroll and employee benefits, or for related functions.

25. Am I able to go outside?

You can go outside to engage in any physical or recreational activity as long as Social Distancing requirements are followed.

26. Can I go to City of Laredo recreational facilities and parks?

No. City of Laredo recreational facilities and parks are closed while this order is in effect.

27. Can I leave home to go to attend religious and worship services?

No. However, places of worship can offer remote access to services, such as by video streaming, emails, or teleconference. Religious institutions that are preparing or conducting worship services for video or teleconference services must limit in-person staff to 10 people or less and follow Social Distancing Guidelines.

28. If my child’s school is providing foods or meals, can I leave home to go to the school to pick up the food or meals?

Yes.

29. How does this affect Board and Commission Meetings?

All City Committee, Board and Commission meetings have been postponed.

30. May I continue riding Public Transit?

Yes but only for essential uses, such as buying groceries, visiting a doctor, or going to work.

31. Will I be evicted from my home during the Declaration period?

To the extent allowed by law, no landlord shall evict a tenant for lack of payment while this Declaration is in effect.

32. Do I have to cancel my planned party (ex. wedding, quinceanera, etc.)?

Yes, all public or private gatherings of any number of people occurring outside a single household unit are prohibited.

33. Can a reception hall or party rental place charge me for changing the date of my cancelled event?

Businesses are prohibited from charging fees for cancelled events that are scheduled to occur during the Declaration period, to the extent allowed by law.

34. Who is enforcing these laws?

The Order will be enforced by Laredo Police Officers and City of Laredo Code Enforcement Inspectors.

35. What are the penalties if I don't comply?

Upon conviction, violations are a Class C misdemeanor punishable by a fine not to exceed \$1,000, confinement in jail for a term not to exceed 180 days or both a fine and confinement.

36. Will I still be billed for my utilities during this time?

Yes. Customers will still be billed during the next two weeks. However, no local utility shall discontinue the provision of cable, internet, water, gas, waste removal and electric utility services to a local resident for lack of payment while this Declaration is in effect, to the extent allowed by law.

37. Was this Declaration necessary?

The City Council unanimously agreed that the measures were drastic, but necessary for the sake of public health.

38. Do I need to stock up on groceries and supplies?

No. There is no need for our community to hoard groceries or supplies as shelves have been and will continue to be restocked. The community is urged to buy what you need and leave some for your neighbors.

39. Who can I call for additional questions?

24/7 Coronavirus Hotline at 956-795-4954.