



COMAL COUNTY

OFFICE OF COUNTY JUDGE

Sherman Krause • 100 Main Plaza • New Braunfels, TX 78130

STAY HOME/WORK SAFELY GUIDANCE

RESPONDING TO THE NOVEL CORONAVIRUS 2019 (“COVID-19”)

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Comal County has faced many disasters with one common storyline – citizens do not wait for someone to do things for us or tell us what to do. We step up and do what is right for our community, and the COVID-19 crisis is no different.

Even before mandatory orders were issued, Comal County residents voluntarily started washing hands more often, using hand sanitizer, disinfecting home and work areas, and maintaining safe distances. Businesses voluntarily took action to protect their employees and customers. Some businesses closed their doors to customers while continuing to provide services with curbside or home delivery. Other businesses changed their hours, limited the number of customers, and/or offered free delivery. Some businesses shut down. Most businesses began more rigorous cleaning and disinfecting routines. Various agencies implemented emergency action plans to ensure the stability of critical infrastructure, like electricity and water.

However, COVID-19 continues to threaten our community. We must do more to stop or slow the spread. Residents should more closely follow guidelines issued by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and orders issued by the Governor or local jurisdictions. Businesses should further limit the risk of customer contact. Water recreation businesses that have long been major economic generators in our community should voluntarily shut down. Close-contact businesses like hair and nail salons, massage therapists, and personal spas should voluntarily shut down until the threat has subsided.

Detailed below are phases to be used during this crisis. Each phase has strategies designed to control the spread of the virus. If one phase proves to be inadequate the next phase may be implemented at any time with more stringent control measures. The goal is to minimize disruptions to daily life while (1) encouraging individuals to recognize their role in combating the spread of COVID-19 by implementing personal safety measures to protect themselves and their families; (2) empowering businesses and community organizations to voluntarily implement recommended best practices for safe operations; (3) protecting critical infrastructure and limited medical resources for the community; and (4) protecting individuals at greater risk of serious consequences related to contracting COVID-19.

Voluntary Mitigation Measures:

Personal Safety Measures. All Comal County residents are encouraged to stay at home except for health and safety activities, obtain necessary supplies, go to work, or engage in physical exercise outside. Residents are discouraged from social gatherings of greater than ten individuals and are strongly encouraged to practice social distancing to prevent spreading or contracting COVID-19. People are discouraged from visiting gyms or massage parlors as ordered by Governor Greg Abbott. The practice of personal protective measures and good hygiene with frequent hand washing, not touching one's face, and disinfecting items and surfaces are crucial at this time. People who are sick should stay home, and not engage in activity outside of their home except for medical treatment. If someone in a household has tested positive for COVID-19 they must follow the isolation and quarantine measures prescribed by local, state, or federal health authorities. Additionally, if a member of a household tests positive, all other members of the household should consider themselves positive and also follow the isolation and quarantine measures prescribed by local, state, or federal health authorities.

Business Best Practices. All restaurants, prepared food retailers, microbreweries/micro distilleries, or wineries may only provide take out, delivery, or drive-through services consistent with the Executive Order issued by Governor Greg Abbott. All businesses operating within Comal County are encouraged to facilitate employees who are able to work remotely from their homes. Additionally, businesses should implement social distancing measures keeping at least six feet between both employees and customers, eliminate gatherings by keeping groups to ten or fewer people including both employees and customers, and postpone non-essential work travel. Businesses are also encouraged to regularly disinfect and clean all surfaces and facilities for the protection of their employees and the customers they serve. Businesses should also expand sick leave policies and ensure flexible leave policies for staff who need to stay home due to school or childcare closings. Businesses should also encourage everyone to stay home if they are sick, including both employees and customers.

Community and Faith-Based Organizations Best Practices. All community and faith-based organizations are encouraged to limit social gathering to ten or fewer people keeping at least six feet between individuals. Sporting or entertainment events should be cancelled or broadcast without audience participation. Faith-based services should be conducted using video, teleconference or other remote measures.

Critical Infrastructure. Hospitals, surgical centers, and healthcare providers should follow the Executive Orders issued by Governor Greg Abbott which include delay of elective medical, surgical, and dental procedures by following the non-essential procedures guidance of the Governor's Executive Orders.

At Risk Individuals. Nursing homes and retirement/assisted living facilities should follow the Executive Orders issued by Governor Greg Abbott that restrict visitors. Additionally, staff should wear masks and wash their hands thoroughly before entering and after exiting the rooms of their residents. These facilities are also encouraged to regularly disinfect and clean all surfaces for the protection of their staff and residents who are at greater risk of serious consequences of COVID-19.

Targeted Mandatory Mitigation Strategies:

Where Voluntary Mitigation Measures are inadequate because of insufficient voluntary response, or COVID-19 is a continued risk to the health and safety of the county, additional targeted mandatory mitigation strategies will be implemented for close-contact businesses, such as spas, massage therapy studios, tattoo shops, or hair and nail salons. Implementation of these measures will be mandatory and will include associated criminal penalties. Additionally, where individuals do not heed the guidance and fail to practice personal safety measures, water recreation businesses and all parks will be closed with violation of these orders resulting in criminal penalties.

Community Mandatory Mitigation Strategies:

Where Targeted Mandatory Strategies are inadequate and evidence of a continued or greater risk to the health and safety of the residents of Comal County, Community Mandatory Mitigation Strategies will be implemented. Such measures will include mandated Stay Home/Work Safely Orders requiring all people living in the unincorporated areas of Comal County to stay home unless engaging in Exempted Activities providing governmental functions or operating an Exempted Business. Violations of the Stay Home/Work Safely Orders will include associated criminal penalties.