



SAN BENITO COUNTY

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

MARTIN FENSTERSHEIB, MD, MPH
INTERIM HEALTH OFFICER

TRACEY BELTON
AGENCY DIRECTOR

PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES
Healthy People in Healthy Communities

PRESS RELEASE

SAN BENITO COUNTY HEALTH OFFICER ISSUES ORDER REQUIRING RESIDENTS TO STAY AT HOME EXCEPT FOR ESSENTIAL NEEDS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 17, 2020

Contact:

Sam Perez, MPH, Public Information Officer
Tel: 831-637-5367

In union with other Bay Area counties and to conform with new guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Governor Gavin Newsom, San Benito County Health Officer Dr. Marty Fenstersheib has issued an order to preserve health care capacity and protect the community from the impacts of novel coronavirus, or COVID-19.

This Order shall become effective at 12:01 a.m. on March 18, 2020 and will continue to be in effect until 11:59 p.m. on April 7, 2020, or until it is extended, rescinded, superseded, or amended in writing by the Health Officer. The order is intended to help restrict the spread of COVID-19 in the community.

“We know these measures will significantly disrupt people’s day to day lives, but they are absolutely necessary,” said Dr. Marty Fenstersheib. “We all have a responsibility to do our part to protect our neighbors and slow the spread of this virus by staying at home unless it is absolutely essential to go outside. I want to encourage everyone to remain calm and emphasize that all essential needs will continue to be met. “

COVID-19 is a new virus impacting several nations including the U.S. There are 4,709 confirmed cases in the U.S., including 454 in California and two active cases in San Benito County. While the symptoms of cough, fever and respiratory difficulties are minor in most patients including children, the disease can be fatal in certain vulnerable populations.

The Health Officer’s order defines essential services and activities to include exceptions necessary to limit negative public health impact. They include law and safety operations, essential government services, health care operations, pharmacies, child care facilities, food production including farming, food businesses including groceries and other food retailers, telecommunications, restaurants operating at reduced capacity, shelter including hotels, social services, establishments and agencies serving economically disadvantaged populations, gas stations, banks, laundry businesses, and safety and sanitation businesses.

Furthermore, the County and its partner agencies are quickly mobilizing to develop contingency plans to help protect low-income and other vulnerable populations and help assure essential needs are met.

On Sunday, March 15, 2020, California Governor Gavin Newsom issued a directive recommending isolation for elderly adults aged 65 and older, the closure of non-essential commercial establishments, and reduced capacity at restaurants.

“While county residents must comply with this order, they are also encouraged to support each other by checking on vulnerable neighbors and making sure their needs are met, supporting families whose children are out of school, and supporting local businesses where possible including ordering takeout food,” stated Dr. Fenstersheib.

Essential Activities (exemptions to the shelter in place order) include:

- Tasks essential to maintain health and safety, such as obtaining medicine or seeing a doctor;
- Getting necessary services or supplies for themselves, their family or household members, such as food, medicine, pet food, and supplies necessary for staying home;
- Engaging in outdoor activity, such as walking, hiking, or running provided that at least six feet of social distancing is maintained;
- Performing work providing essential services at an Essential Business or Essential Government function (defined below in number 2);
- Caring for a family member in another household;
- Caring for elderly, minors, dependents, persons with disabilities, or other vulnerable persons.

Essential government services to remain open, such as police, fire, healthcare and human services, as well as essential stores like grocery markets, pharmacies, banks and gas stations.

Restaurants are limited to take-out and delivery only: bars, gyms, and non-essential stores to close.

Exemptions:

Individuals may leave their place of residence to:

1) Operate an Essential Business, which includes:

- Healthcare operations, including home health workers;
- Essential infrastructure, including construction of housing and operation of public transportation and utilities;
- Grocery stores;
- Businesses that provide necessities of life for economically disadvantaged individuals and shelter facilities;

- Pharmacies, health care supply stores, and health care facilities;
- Gas stations and auto repair facilities;
- Banks;
- Garbage collection;
- Hardware stores, plumbers, electricians, and other service providers necessary to maintain the safety, sanitation, and essential operation of residences and other essential businesses;
- Educational institutions, for the purposes of facilitating distance learning;
- Laundromats;
- Childcare facilities providing services that enable essential employees to go to work;
- Roles required for any Essential Business to “maintain basic operations,” which include security, payroll, and similar activities.

2) Perform an Essential Government Function:

- This includes all services needed to ensure the continuing operation of the government agencies and provide for the health, safety and welfare of the public.

Stay informed. For more information about novel coronavirus (COVID-19), see the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) website at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html> , call 211 or text “COVID19” to 211211 or visit the San Benito County Public Health Services website for updated local information at <http://hhsa.cosb.us/publichealth/>.

###