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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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March 20, 2020

RESIDENTS ASKED TO STAY HOME EXCEPT FOR ESSENTIAL NEEDS TO SLOW COVID-19

MERCED—Following Governor Gavin Newsom’s Executive Order N-33-20 asking Californians to stay home, Merced County’s Health Officer issued an Order directing County residents to remain in their places of residence except to perform or receive essential services.

The order from Merced County Health Officer Dr. Kenneth Bird is effective as of today, March 20, 2020, and will remain in effect until further notice. The action is intended to help slow the spread of COVID-19, otherwise known as novel coronavirus.

Examples of essential services that will remain open include gas stations, pharmacies, agricultural operations, grocery stores, take-out/delivery restaurants, banks, and laundromats. Examples of services directed to temporarily close include bars, entertainment venues, gyms, and public events or gatherings.

When residents need to leave their homes to purchase food, supplies and other essential items, they are strongly encouraged to practice social distancing at all times.

Local government services deemed essential will continue to function in Merced County and its six cities. This includes public safety, garbage pickup service, water service and basic public utilities.

Health Officer orders are legally enforceable, however, residents are permitted to leave their homes to perform essential functions and certain other activities while implementing safe social distancing.

Dr. Bird described the orders to stay at home as a necessary step to slow the spread of COVID-19.

“This Order is based on scientific evidence and past practices regarding the most effective approaches to slowing down the transmission of COVID-19,” Dr. Bird said. “We know that this virus will infect a lot more people, and we need to get ahead of it as much as possible.”

Public Health Director Dr. Rebecca Nanyonjo-Kemp, DrPH, reaffirmed Merced County’s commitment to seeing our residents through this situation.

“As employees of Merced County, we’re public servants and we exist to serve the community,” Nanyonjo-Kemp said. “Our citizens need us now more than ever. We will continue to provide the best services possible while preserving the health and safety of the public and our employees. We’re here for you.”

To view Merced County’s Order, you can visit www.countyofmerced.com/coronavirus. Attached to this news release is the Health Officer Order and FAQs that provide additional detail.

For additional details from the State regarding Executive Order N-33-20, please visit www.covid19.ca.gov.

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ORDER OF THE HEALTH OFFICER
OF THE COUNTY OF MERCED DIRECTING ALL INDIVIDUALS LIVING
IN THE COUNTY TO STAY AT HOME OR AT THEIR PLACE OF
RESIDENCE EXCEPT THAT THEY MAY LEAVE TO PROVIDE OR
RECEIVE CERTAIN ESSENTIAL SERVICES OR ENGAGE IN CERTAIN
ESSENTIAL ACTIVITIES AND WORK FOR ESSENTIAL BUSINESSES
AND GOVERNMENTAL SERVICES; DIRECTING ALL BUSINESSES AND
GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES TO CEASE NON-ESSENTIAL
OPERATIONS AT PHYSICAL LOCATIONS IN THE COUNTY;
PROHIBITING ALL NON-ESSENTIAL GATHERINGS OF ANY NUMBER
OF INDIVIDUALS; AND ORDERING CESSATION OF ALL NON-
ESSENTIAL TRAVEL

DATE OF ORDER: March 20, 2020

UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF CALIFORNIA HEALTH AND SAFETY CODE SECTIONS 101040, 101085, AND 120175, THE HEALTH OFFICER OF THE COUNTY OF MERCED (“HEALTH OFFICER”) ORDERS:

1. The intent of this Order is to ensure that the maximum number of people self-isolate in their places of residence to the maximum extent feasible, while enabling essential services to continue, to slow the spread of COVID-19 to the maximum extent possible. When people need to leave their places of residence, whether to obtain or perform vital services, or to otherwise facilitate authorized activities necessary for continuity of social and commercial life, they should at all times reasonably possible comply with Social Distancing Requirements as defined in Section 10 below. All provisions of this Order should be interpreted to effectuate this intent. Failure to comply with any of the provisions of this Order constitutes an imminent threat to public health.
2. In accordance with the Order of the State Public Health Officer and the California Governor’s Executive Order N-33-20 both issued on March 19, 2020, all individuals currently living within the County of Merced (the “County”) are ordered to shelter at their place of residence. To the extent individuals are using shared or outdoor spaces, they must at all times as reasonably possible maintain social distancing of at least six feet from any other person when they are outside their residence. All persons may leave their residences only for Essential Activities, Essential Governmental Functions, or to operate Essential Businesses, all as defined in Section 10. Individuals experiencing homelessness are exempt from this Section, but are strongly urged to obtain shelter, and governmental and other entities are strongly urged to make such shelter available as soon as possible and to the maximum extent practicable (and to utilize Social Distancing Requirements in their operation).

3. All businesses with a facility in the County, except Essential Businesses as defined below in Section 10, are required to cease all activities at facilities located within the County except Minimum Basic Operations, as defined in Section 10. For clarity, businesses may also continue operations consisting exclusively of employees or contractors performing activities at their own residences (i.e., working from home). All Essential Businesses are strongly encouraged to remain open. To the greatest extent feasible, Essential Businesses shall comply with Social Distancing Requirements as defined in Section 10 below, including, but not limited to, when any customers are standing in line.
4. All public and private gatherings of any number of people occurring outside a household or living unit are prohibited, except for the limited purposes as expressly permitted in Section 10. All bars, wineries and brew-pubs should be closed, all in-dining at restaurants should cease, with the exception of home delivery and takeout, and all gyms, bingo halls, and card rooms should close. Nothing in this Order prohibits the gathering of members of a household or living unit.
5. All travel, including, but not limited to, travel on foot, bicycle, scooter, motorcycle, automobile, or public transit, except Essential Travel and Essential Activities as defined below in Section 10, is prohibited. People must use public transit only for purposes of performing Essential Activities or to travel to and from work to operate Essential Businesses or maintain Essential Governmental Functions. People riding on public transit must comply with Social Distancing Requirements as defined in Section 10 below, to the greatest extent feasible. This Order allows travel into or out of the County to perform Essential Activities, operate Essential Businesses, or maintain Essential Governmental Functions.
6. This Order is issued based on evidence of increasing occurrence of COVID-19 throughout the state, scientific evidence and best practices regarding the most effective approaches to slow the transmission of communicable diseases generally and COVID-19 specifically, and evidence that the age, condition, and health of a significant portion of the population of the County places it at risk for serious health complications, including death, from COVID-19. Due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus in the general public, which is now a pandemic according to the World Health Organization, there is a public health emergency throughout the County. Making the problem worse, some individuals who contract the COVID-19 virus have no symptoms or have mild symptoms, which means they may not be aware they carry the virus. Because even people without symptoms can transmit the disease, and because evidence shows the disease is easily spread, gatherings can result in the transmission of the virus. The scientific evidence shows that at this stage of the emergency, it is essential to slow virus transmission as much as possible to protect the most vulnerable and to prevent the health care system from being overwhelmed. One proven way to slow the transmission is to limit interactions among people to the greatest extent practicable. By reducing the spread of the COVID-19 virus, this Order helps preserve critical and limited healthcare capacity in the County.
7. This Order also is issued in light of a significant and increasing number of suspected cases of community transmission and likely further significant increases in transmission. Widespread testing for COVID-19 is not yet available but is expected to increase in the

coming days. This Order is necessary to slow the rate of spread and the Health Officer will re-evaluate it as further data becomes available.

8. This Order is issued in accordance with, and incorporates by reference, the following:
 - a) The Proclamation of the State of Emergency issued by Governor Gavin Newsom on March 4, 2020.
 - b) Executive Order N-25-20 issued by Governor Gavin Newsom on March 12, 2020.
 - c) Proclamation on Declaring a National Emergency Concerning the Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Outbreak issued by the President of the United States on March 13, 2020.
 - d) Order of the Merced County Health Officer on March 13, 2020.
 - e) Executive Order N-33-20 issued by Governor Gavin Newsom on March 19, 2020.
 - f) Order of the State Public Health Officer issued on March 19, 2020.
9. This Order comes after the release of substantial guidance from the County Health Department, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the California Department of Public Health, and other public health officials throughout the United States and around the world, including a variety of prior orders to combat the spread and harms of COVID-19. The Health Officer will continue to assess the quickly evolving situation and may modify or extend this Order, or issue additional Orders, related to COVID-19.

10. Definitions and Exemptions.

- a. For purposes of this Order, individuals may leave their residence only to perform any of the following “Essential Activities.” But people at high risk of severe illness from COVID-19 and people who are sick are urged to stay in their residence to the extent possible except as necessary to seek medical care.
 - i. To engage in activities or perform tasks essential to their health and safety, or to the health and safety of their family or household members (including, but not limited to, pets), such as, by way of example only and without limitation, obtaining medical supplies or medication, visiting a health care professional, or obtaining supplies they need to work from home.
 - ii. To obtain necessary services or supplies for themselves and their family or household members, or to deliver those services or supplies to others, such as, by way of example only and without limitation, canned food, dry goods, fresh fruits and vegetables, pet supply, fresh meats, fish, and poultry, and any other household consumer products, and products necessary to maintain the safety, sanitation, and essential operation of residence.
 - iii. To engage in outdoor activity, provided the individuals comply with Social Distancing Requirements as defined in this Section, such as, by way of example and without limitation, walking, hiking, or running.
 - iv. To perform work providing essential products and services at an

Essential Business or to otherwise carry out activities specifically permitted in this Order, including Minimum Basic Operations.

- v. To care for a family member or pet in another household.
- b. For purposes of this Order, individuals may leave their residence to work for or obtain services at any “Healthcare Operations” including hospitals, clinics, dentists, pharmacies, pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies, other healthcare facilities, healthcare suppliers, home healthcare services providers, mental health providers, or any related and/or ancillary healthcare services. “Healthcare Operations” also includes veterinary care and all healthcare services provided to animals. This exemption shall be construed broadly to avoid any impacts to the delivery of healthcare, broadly defined. “Healthcare Operations” does not include fitness and exercise gyms and similar facilities.
- c. For purposes of this Order, individuals may leave their residence to provide any services or perform any work necessary to the operations and maintenance of “Essential Infrastructure,” including, but not limited to, public works construction, residential and commercial construction, airport operations, water, sewer, gas, electrical, oil refining, roads and highways, public transportation, solid waste collection and removal, internet, and telecommunications systems (including the provision of essential global, national, and local infrastructure for computing services, business infrastructure, communications, and web-based services), provided that they carry out those services or that work in compliance with Social Distancing Requirements as defined this Section, to the extent possible.
- d. For purposes of this Order, all first responders, emergency management personnel, emergency dispatchers, court personnel, and law enforcement personnel, and others who need to perform essential services are categorically exempt from this Order. Further, nothing in this Order shall prohibit any individual from performing or accessing “Essential Governmental Functions,” as determined by the governmental entity performing those functions. Each governmental entity shall identify and designate appropriate employees or contractors to continue providing and carrying out any Essential Governmental Functions. All Essential Governmental Functions shall be performed in compliance with Social Distancing Requirements as defined in this Section, to the extent possible.
- e. For the purposes of this Order, covered businesses include any for-profit, non-profit, or educational entities, regardless of the nature of the service, the function they perform, or its corporate or entity structure.
- f. For the purposes of this Order, “Essential Businesses” means:
 - i. Healthcare Operations and Essential Infrastructure;
 - ii. Grocery stores, certified farmers’ markets, farm and produce stands, supermarkets, food banks, convenience stores, and other establishments engaged in the retail sale of canned food, dry goods, fresh fruits and vegetables, pet supply, fresh meats, fish, and poultry, and any other household consumer products (such as cleaning and

- personal care products). This includes stores that sell groceries and also sell other non-grocery products, and products necessary to maintaining the safety, sanitation, and essential operation of residences;
- iii. Agriculture, food, and beverage cultivation, processing, testing and distribution, including but not limited to, farming, ranching, fishing, dairies, creameries, wineries and breweries in order to preserve inventory and production (not for retail business), as well as business activities that support production and processing by providing essential agricultural supplies and services, including but not limited to, transportation, manufacturing, chemicals, equipment, and services such as cooling, storing, packing, and distribution of such products for wholesale or retail sale;
 - iv. Businesses that provide food, shelter, and social services, and other necessities of life for economically disadvantaged or otherwise needy individuals;
 - v. Newspapers, television, radio, and other media services;
 - vi. Gas stations and auto-supply, sales and auto-repair, and related facilities;
 - vii. Banks and related financial institutions;
 - viii. Hardware stores;
 - ix. Plumbers, electricians, exterminators, custodial/janitorial workers, handyman services, funeral home workers and morticians, moving services, HVAC installers, carpenters, vegetation services, tree maintenance, landscapers, gardeners, property managers, private security personnel and other service providers who provide services to maintain the safety, sanitation, and essential operation to properties and other Essential Businesses.
 - x. Businesses providing mailing and shipping services, including post office boxes;
 - xi. Educational institutions—including public and private K-12 schools, colleges, and universities—for purposes of facilitating distance learning or performing essential functions, provided that social distancing of six-foot per person is maintained to the greatest extent possible;
 - xii. Laundromats, drycleaners, and laundry service providers;
 - xiii. Restaurants and other facilities that prepare and serve food, but only for delivery or carry out. Schools and other entities that typically provide free food services to students or members of the public may continue to do so under this Order on the condition that the food is provided to students or members of the public on a pick-up and take-away basis only. Schools and other entities that provide food services under this exemption shall not permit the food to be eaten at the site where it is provided, or at any other gathering site;
 - xiv. Businesses that supply products needed for people to work from home;
 - xv. Businesses that supply other essential businesses with the support or supplies necessary to operate;
 - xvi. Businesses that ship or deliver groceries, food, goods or services directly to residences;
 - xvii. Airlines, taxis, and other private transportation providers providing transportation services necessary for Essential Activities and other

- purposes expressly authorized in this Order;
 - xviii. Home-based care for seniors, adults, or children;
 - xix. Residential facilities and shelters for seniors, adults, and children;
 - xx. Professional services, such as legal or accounting services, when necessary to assist in compliance with legally mandated activities;
 - xxi. Delivery services that provide transport of essential products, such as water, food and household products;
 - xxii. Childcare facilities providing services that enable employees exempted in this Order to work as permitted. To the extent possible, childcare facilities must operate under the following mandatory conditions:
 - 1. Childcare must be carried out in stable groups of 12 or fewer (“stable” means that the same 12 or fewer children are in the same group each day).
 - 2. Children shall not change from one group to another.
 - 3. If more than one group of children is cared for at one facility, each group shall be in a separate room. Groups shall not mix with each other.
 - 4. Childcare providers shall remain solely with one group of children.
- g. For the purposes of this Order, “Minimum Basic Operations” include the following, provided that employees comply with Social Distancing Requirements as defined this Section, to the extent possible, while carrying out such operations:
- i. The minimum necessary activities to maintain the value of the business’s inventory, ensure security, process payroll and employee benefits, or for related functions.
 - ii. The minimum necessary activities to facilitate employees of the business being able to continue to work remotely from their residences.
- h. For the purposes of this Order, “Essential Travel” includes travel for any of the following purposes. Individuals engaged in any Essential Travel must comply with all Social Distancing Requirements as defined in this Section below.
- i. Any travel related to the provision of or access to Essential Activities, Essential Governmental Functions, Essential Businesses, or Minimum Basic Operations.
 - ii. Travel to care for elderly, minors, dependents, persons with disabilities, or other vulnerable persons.
 - iii. Travel to or from educational institutions for purposes of receiving materials for distance learning, for receiving meals, and any other related services.
 - iv. Travel to return to a place of residence from outside the jurisdiction.
 - v. Travel required by law enforcement or court order.
 - vi. Travel required for non-residents to return to their place of residence outside the County.

- i. For purposes of this Order, residences include hotels, motels, shared rental units and similar facilities.
 - j. For purposes of this Order, “Social Distancing Requirements” includes maintaining at least six-foot social distancing from other individuals, washing hands with soap and water for at least twenty seconds as frequently as possible or using hand sanitizer, covering coughs or sneezes (into the sleeve or elbow, not hands), regularly cleaning high-touch surfaces, and not shaking hands.
11. Pursuant to Government Code sections 26602 and 41601 and Health and Safety Code sections 101029 and 131080, the Health Officer requests that the Sheriff and all chiefs of police in the County ensure compliance with and enforce this Order. The violation of any provision of this Order constitutes an imminent threat to public health.
12. In accordance with California Health and Safety Code section 131080, the Health Officer will follow the guidance of the California Department of Public Health and may modify or extend this Order, or issue additional Orders.
13. This Order shall become effective immediately and will continue until it is rescinded, superseded, or amended in writing by the Health Officer.
14. Copies of this Order shall promptly be: (1) made available at the County Administration Building at 2222 M Street, Merced, California 95340; (2) posted on the County Public Health Department’s website (countyofmerced.com); and (3) provided to any member of the public requesting a copy of this Order.
15. If any provision of this Order to the application thereof to any person or circumstance is held to be invalid, the remainder of the Order, including the application of such part or provision to other persons or circumstances, shall not be affected and shall continue in full force and effect. To this end, the provisions of this Order are severable.

IT IS SO ORDERED:



Kenneth Bird, MD, MPH
Merced County Health Officer

Dated: March 20, 2020



Frequently Asked Questions Regarding New Order Directing Individuals to Stay at Home

Updated March 20, 2020

The order effective immediately limits activity, travel, and business functions to only the most essential needs. This order and guidance comes after California Governor Gavin Newsom's Executive Order N-33-20 and Order of the State Public Health Officer both issued on March 19, 2020 in addition to substantial input from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and best practices from other health officials around the world. This order is in effect until it is rescinded, superseded or amended in writing by the Health Officer.

Note that these FAQs will continue to be updated. Please check back for updates and clarifications.

GENERAL QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ORDER

What does this Order do?

This Order requires that most people stay home starting as soon as possible immediately, unless they are engaged in certain "Essential Activities", which are discussed more below. For most people, this means you and those you live with should remain at home. You are allowed to leave your home for specified reasons to make sure you have the necessities of life (discussed more below) such as getting food and medical supplies. You are also allowed to go outside to take care of a pet or for exercise so long as you do not congregate in a group and maintain at least six feet of distance between you and other people.

When does the Order go into effect?

The Order went into effect on March 20, 2020.

How long does the Order last?

The Order is currently set to last until it is rescinded, superseded or amended. How long the restrictions take place will depend on what the County Health Officer decides is necessary to protect public health.

Can the Order be changed?

Yes. The Health Officer may make changes to the Order as more information emerges about the public health situation and issue new orders and directive as conditions warrant. Check the County website at <http://www.countyofmerced.com/coronavirus> regularly for updates. The County is working with the media to share important updates and information.

Where is the Order in effect?

This Order is in effect across all of Merced County, including unincorporated areas.

Who issued the Order?

This Order was issued by the Merced County Public Health Officer after conferring with the Merced County Public Health officials. The Health Officer has the authority under state law to issue Orders to protect the health and welfare of everyone in their jurisdictions.

I run an Essential Business, as defined by the Order. Do I need to get an official letter of authorization from the County to operate?

No. If your business is in the list of Essential Businesses provided in the Order, then you may operate it. You do not need to obtain any specific authorization from the County to do so.

I work for an Essential Business, as defined by the Order. Do I need to have a letter from my employer or other documentation to travel?

No. You do not need to carry official documentation demonstrating that you are exempt under the Order. But be prepared to explain if requested by law enforcement why your travel is authorized under the Order.

QUESTIONS ABOUT STAYING AT HOME

What is the difference between “stay at home” and “social distancing”?

Staying at home is a more rigorous form of social distancing.

Staying at home means you:

- Can only leave your home for “essential activities,” to work for an “essential business,” or for “essential travel,” which are defined in the Order (see FAQs for details)
- Cannot host or attend any gatherings

You should also maintain a 6 foot distance from other people as much as possible, wash your hands frequently for at least 20 seconds each time (or use hand sanitizer), frequently disinfect high-touch surfaces, and stay home if you are sick.

Can I leave home to visit friends or family members if there is no urgent need or I am not performing an essential activity?

No. For your safety as well as their safety, we need to help each other fight the spread of COVID-19 by staying at home.

Can I still get my mail and deliveries?

Yes. You will still be able to get mail and other deliveries at your home.

Can I still order the things I need online and have them delivered to my residence?

Yes. Businesses that deliver goods or services directly to residences are “essential businesses” that may continue to operate.

Can I go out to do laundry or have my laundry done?

Yes. Maintain social distancing.

Can I get my prescriptions or other health care needs? Can I leave home to go to the pharmacy to get my prescription filled?

Yes. Drug stores and other medical supply stores are allowed to operate. When possible, you should have prescription medicines and health care supplies delivered to your home.

What if I need to get healthcare from my medical provider?

You can still get your health needs addressed. Contact your health care provider to see if they are providing regular services. Some services, especially elective procedures, may be postponed or canceled. If you are feeling sick, please

first call your doctor, a nurse hotline, or an urgent care center. Do not go to the emergency room of a hospital unless you are having an actual medical emergency.

Can I still seek non-essential medical care like eye exams, teeth cleaning, elective procedures, etc.?

Generally, you should postpone non-essential medical and dental care if possible. If it can wait, then wait. Check with your provider for specific guidance. They may cancel services. You should not expose yourself or others by pursuing health care or maintenance care that can wait a few weeks.

Should I stock up on food, necessities like toilet paper, and on medicines?

No. You will continue to be able to purchase these items. Stores selling necessary items like grocery stores, pharmacies, and hardware stores will remain open. Please continue to buy normal quantities of these items on the same schedule you normally follow. This will ensure that there is enough for everyone.

What should I do if I'm sick? If I or a family member need immediate medical attention, can I leave home to go to the doctor or hospital?

If you are feeling sick, first call your doctor, a nurse hotline, or an urgent care center before going to the hospital. Do not go to the emergency room of a hospital unless you are having an actual medical emergency. But you can and should seek medical advice if you or a family member is sick. If it is not an emergency, please contact your primary care provider to determine next steps. Also, you can check online resources to help you assess symptoms if you are worried about whether you or a loved one has COVID-19. You should check <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html> for more information. Call 911 or go to an emergency room if you are experiencing a medical emergency.

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. Be extremely cautious when providing care to vulnerable people and ensure that you protect them and yourself by following social distancing guidelines such as washing hands before and after, using hand sanitizer, maintaining at least 6 feet of distance when possible, and coughing or sneezing into a tissue.

Can I visit loved ones in the hospital, nursing home, skilled nursing facility, or other residential care facility?

You may visit a hospital or other healthcare facility only for the purpose of obtaining health care services and supplies. Non-essential visitations are not permitted. Do not visit a nursing home, skilled nursing facility, or residential care facility other than for the purpose of securing care. People over 60 years of age are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19.

What if I can't get out of the home? How can I get supplies and food?

Please contact friends, family, or others you know who can provide support. They are permitted to pick up any of your needs. You can also order food and other supplies, and have them delivered to your home. If you think you might be eligible for meals on wheels, call (209) 385-3105 to start the eligibility intake process.

Can I leave home to go to my church, synagogue, or mosque?

No. For your safety as well as the safety of your fellow worshippers, we need to help each other fight the spread of COVID-19 by staying at home. Places of worship may offer remote access to services, such as by emails, video streaming, or teleconference.

The Order prohibits non-essential travel on foot or bike -- does that mean that I can't go on a walk or take a bike ride?

No. The Order allows you to go outside for exercise so long as you maintain social distancing (more than 6 feet from persons who are not part of your household). This includes activities like walks or hikes or bike rides or going to a park.

Can I leave home to exercise?

If you will be outdoors and not in close contact with other people, yes. Otherwise, no. Fitness centers, exercise gyms, recreational centers, golf courses, and public pools are not permitted to operate.

Can golf courses remain open?

No.

I become anxious when cooped up in my house. Am I allowed to go to a park or on a hike? Can I travel to a County park or open space?

Yes. Spending time outside improves mood and well-being, and is particularly beneficial to children. You can go for walks, go to the park, and engage in other similar activities, but you should maintain social distance (more than six feet away from persons who are not part of your household) to avoid spread of the virus.

Can I go shopping for things other than food/groceries?

Yes. You can shop for anything that is related to health care, hardware supplies, supplies needed to telecommute, and supplies essential to safety and sanitation. But you should minimize unnecessary trips.

Can I go to a bar/nightclub/theater?

No. Entertainment venues are not allowed to operate.

Can I go to a restaurant, café, coffee or tea shop, ice cream shop, or other foodservice location?

Yes, but only to pick up food. You cannot dine, eat, or drink in or around the facility.

Can I walk my dog/pet?

Yes. Be sure that you distance yourself at least six feet from others who are not part of your household.

Can I go to a vet or pet hospital if my pet is sick?

Yes. Please call first to determine if the vet has any restrictions in place.

I don't cook—how can I purchase meals?

Restaurants, cafes, food trucks, and similar establishments are encouraged to remain open to supply meals to the public via delivery and carryout. You can also purchase prepared foods at grocery stores, supermarkets, certified farmers' markets, convenience stores, and other such food retailers.

How can I access free or reduced-price meals for myself or my family?

Schools, soup kitchens, food banks, and other entities that provide free or reduced priced food or meals to the public are encouraged to continue providing these services. You must pick up and take away the food or have it brought to you. Do not eat on the premises.

Can I take my kids to the park and can we use playgrounds?

The Order allows you to engage in outdoor activities, provided that you maintain adequate social distancing. While we encourage use of parks, we strongly discourage the use of playgrounds because they include high-touch surfaces, and because it is typically not possible to maintain social distancing at playgrounds.

Can I carry out a court-ordered visit with my kids?

Yes. The Order exempts travel by court order or law enforcement.

QUESTIONS ABOUT BUSINESSES, EMPLOYMENT, AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Will all business offices and stores be required to close?

No. “Essential businesses” may keep their facilities open (and are encouraged to keep them open) to continue providing essential services and products to the public. Employees may leave home to go to these jobs.

Non-essential businesses may keep facilities open only to maintain minimum basic operations, such as maintaining the value of an inventory, keeping the site secure, or ensuring that employees are able to work remotely. The Order does not prohibit any employees from working from home.

What are “Essential Businesses”?

The Order provides the following list of “Essential Businesses”:

- i. Healthcare Operations and Essential Infrastructure;
- ii. Grocery stores, certified farmers’ markets, farm and produce stands, supermarkets, food banks, convenience stores, and other establishments engaged in the retail sale of canned food, dry goods, fresh fruits and vegetables, pet supply, fresh meats, fish, and poultry, and any other household consumer products (such as cleaning and personal care products). This includes stores that sell groceries and also sell other non- grocery products, and products necessary to maintaining the safety, sanitation, and essential operation of residences;
- iii. Agriculture, food, and beverage cultivation, processing, and distribution, including but not limited to, farming, ranching, fishing, dairies, creameries, wineries and breweries in order to preserve inventory and production (not for retail business), as well as business activities that support production and processing by providing essential agricultural supplies and services, including but not limited to, transportation, manufacturing, chemicals, equipment, and services such as cooling, storing, packing, and distribution of such products for wholesale or retail sale.
- iv. Businesses that provide food, shelter, and social services, and other necessities of life for economically disadvantaged or otherwise needy individuals;
- v. Newspapers, television, radio, and other media services;
- vi. Gas stations and auto-supply, auto dealerships, auto-repair, and related facilities;
- vii. Banks and related financial institutions;
- viii. Hardware stores;
- ix. Plumbers, electricians, exterminators, custodial/janitorial workers, handyman services, funeral home workers and morticians, moving services, HVAC installers, carpenters, vegetations services, tree maintenance, landscapers, gardeners, property managers, private security personnel and other service providers who provide services to maintain the safety, sanitation, and essential operation to properties and other Essential Businesses;
- x. Businesses providing mailing and shipping services, including post office boxes;

- xi. Educational institutions—including public and private K-12 schools, colleges, and universities—for purposes of facilitating distance learning or performing essential functions, provided that social distancing of six-feet per person is maintained to the greatest extent possible;
- xii. Laundromats, drycleaners, and laundry service providers;
- xiii. Restaurants and other facilities that prepare and serve food, but only for delivery or carry out. Schools and other entities that typically provide free food services to students or members of the public may continue to do so under this Order on the condition that the food is provided to students or members of the public on a pick-up and take-away basis only. Schools and other entities that provide food services under this exemption shall not permit the food to be eaten at the site where it is provided, or at any other gathering site;
- xiv. Businesses that supply products needed for people to work from home;
- xv. Businesses that supply other essential businesses with the support or supplies necessary to operate;
- xvi. Businesses that ship or deliver groceries, food, goods or services directly to residences;
- xvii. Airlines, taxis, and other private transportation providers providing transportation services necessary for Essential Activities and other purposes expressly authorized in this Order;
- xviii. Home-based care for seniors, adults, or children;
- xix. Residential facilities and shelters for seniors, adults, and children;
- xx. Professional services, such as legal or accounting services, when necessary to assist in compliance with legally mandated activities;
- xxi. Delivery services that provide transport of essential products, such as water, food and household products;
- xxii. Childcare facilities providing services that enable employees exempted in this Order to work as permitted. To the extent possible, childcare facilities must operate under the following mandatory conditions:
 - 1. Childcare must be carried out in stable groups of 12 or fewer (“stable” means that the same 12 or fewer children are in the same group each day).
 - 2. Children shall not change from one group to another.
 - 3. If more than one group of children is cared for at one facility, each group shall be in a separate room. Groups shall not mix with each other.
 - 4. Childcare providers shall remain solely with one group of children.

I operate a farm, am I allowed to continue my operation and have employees report to work?

Yes, cultivation, processing and production of agriculture and farming is considered an Essential Business.

What if my business is not considered an Essential Business? Does this Order require that I shut down my business facility?

You and your employees are allowed to perform “Minimum Basic Operations” at your work place, so long as employees maintain a distance of six feet from one another to the greatest extent feasible. Minimum Basic Operations include maintaining the value of inventory, ensuring security, and ensuring that employees can work remotely. Other than to maintain “Minimum Basic Operations,” employees can only work remotely from their residences.

I currently receive benefits through Merced County’s Human Services Agency. Will this order interrupt my benefits?

No, the Human Services Agency is considered an Essential Governmental Function and will continue to operate.

Does this Order require that schools shut down?

This Order requires that all schools stop holding classes at physical locations within the County. However, schools may provide distance learning to their students. Employees of schools may go to work for the purpose of providing distance learning to their students. Schools can also continue to offer students free and reduced-price lunches for takeaway or delivery, which many schools are doing.

Will this order prevent companies working on vaccines and testing for COVID-19 from continuing to do that work?

No. The Order exempts any business that is performing work related to the delivery of health care.

I am in the business of manufacturing food that I supply to grocery stores and other food retailers. Am I required to shut down?

No. All suppliers of essential businesses are allowed (and encouraged) to continue operating. This includes businesses that supply food goods and prepared meals to grocery stores and other food retailers.

Does the Order require that businesses stop work that is necessary to our health care system?

No. The Order exempts any business that is performing work related to the delivery of health care.

Can my company continue construction on a health care facility?

Yes, the Order exempts any business that is performing work related to the delivery of health care.

Can my company tend to its labs under this Order?

You and your employees are allowed to perform “Minimum Basic Operations” on site at your work place, so long as employees maintain a distance of six feet from one another to the greatest extent feasible. If tending to the company’s labs is necessary to maintaining the value of inventory, the Order allows for this work to continue. Other than that, your lab may only operate if it performs work exempted in the Order.

My business principally manufactures, supplies, or repairs cell phones. Can it operate?

Yes. If your business is primarily engaged in supply or repair of cell phones or other telecommunications devices, then it is essential and may continue to operate under the Order.

Are non-profit organizations allowed to continue operating?

If they provide essential services as described in the Order, then yes, they can and should continue providing those services. This would include non-profits operating food pantries, providing housing for homeless residents, and providing other critical services.

What if some of the work my business does at its facility is essential and some is nonessential?

Your business can continue to operate its facility to carry out its essential business functions. You must maximize remote work and comply with social distancing requirements at the facility. The facility cannot continue to carry out non-essential business functions.

I operate a “big box store” that sells some clothing in addition to groceries, electronics, and hardware. Do I need to shut down the part of my store that sells non-essential supplies?

No. You may keep your entire store open if it primarily sells essential goods and supplies like food and telecommunication supplies.

What if I have a cafeteria at my worksite. Can it continue to operate to serve workers who are carrying out work exempted in the Order?

The Cafeteria can operate like other food facilities. It can serve food to the remaining employees, so long as the employees take the food away and do not eat it in the cafeteria. The cafeteria should follow the social distancing requirements in the Order.

Is the local government shutting down?

No, essential government functions will continue, including first responders, emergency management personnel, emergency dispatchers, and law enforcement. Other government functions or offices may be subject to reduced schedules or may be closed as part of the effort to fight the spread of COVID-19.

I work for the government—Can I continue to go to work?

Government employees can continue to go to work if they are designated as essential employees by their employer. Each government entity is responsible for determining which of its workers are essential workers.

What do I do if my employer requires me to go to work?

Many businesses are not permitted to operate under this Order. Essential Businesses, as defined in the Order, are allowed (and encouraged) to continue operating. If your work is not an Essential Business, you are not permitted to go to work and your employer is not permitted to require you to attend except to sustain Minimum Basic Operations, as that term is defined in the Order. You may work from home if your work permits.

I work in a hospital or medical clinic, but I’m not sure I’m essential. Should I continue to work? What if I’m over 60?

ALL employees of hospitals, clinics, and other organizations that provide healthcare, provide services to healthcare organizations, provide needed supplies to healthcare organizations, or otherwise maintain healthcare operations of all kinds may continue working.

Both the County’s Order and the Governor’s recent guidance allows essential workers over 60 to continue working, even though others in that age group are being directed to stay home.

What do I do about my kids? I have to work.

If you work for an Essential Business, as described in the Order, you can and should continue to work. Certain employers, schools, and community organizations will be providing childcare for employees of essential businesses. You may also employ a nanny or babysitter to provide home-based care for your kids.

Can bike repair shops continue to operate?

Yes, bike repair shops are treated as an essential business (the same as auto repair shops) because they are necessary to facilitate essential travel.

Can my company continue to provide janitorial services?

Yes, janitorial services are allowed as necessary to health and sanitation.

Can grocery stores, farmers markets, and other food retailers remain open?

Yes. Grocery stores, certified farmers' markets, farm and produce stands, supermarkets, food banks, convenience stores, and similar food retail establishments are encouraged to remain open to provide food and pet supplies to the public. When visiting these establishments, please help retailers maintain at least six feet minimum distance between patrons, including by providing ample space while shopping and waiting in line.

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

Yes.

Can warehouses and distribution centers that supply businesses that ship and deliver stay open?

Yes.

I work for an essential infrastructure organization—can I leave home to go to work?

Yes. You can go to work to maintain and operate essential infrastructure, including public works construction, commercial and residential construction, airport operations, water, sewer, gas, electrical, oil refining, roads and highways, public transportation, solid waste collection and removal, internet, and telecommunications systems (including the provision of essential global, national, and local infrastructure for computing services, business infrastructure, communications, and web-based services).

What construction is allowed to continue?

The Order only exempts construction of housing, commercial, public works, and medical and health care related facilities.

What if I want to go to work at a physical location in the County and I'm not sick?

Unless your work is exempted in the Order, you cannot go to work at a physical location in the County. You may work from home for any business if your employer allows it.

Can I operate a business that sells things that can be delivered to people's homes? Can I shift more of my business to a delivery model?

Deliveries can continue to be sent to people's homes, and you may adjust your business model accordingly while this Order is in place.

My business provides critical services and products for the federal government that we are required to provide on a time-certain basis--can we continue to manufacture these products?

Employees and contractors of any governmental entity may continue to provide the services and products if the governmental entity determines that they are necessary to carry out an essential governmental function.

I work in a cemetery-- can I go to work?

Yes, cemeteries are essential infrastructure.

Are daycare facilities allowed to operate?

Daycare facilities may operate, but only if they comply with the mandatory conditions set forth below and only to provide daycare to the children of employees who are exempted under the Order. This includes employees of essential businesses, employees who are providing for minimum basic operations of non-essential businesses, and governmental employees providing essential governmental functions.

To operate, daycare facilities must comply with the following mandatory conditions:

- 1) Childcare must be carried out in stable groups of 12 or fewer children (meaning that the same 12 or fewer children are in the same group each day);
- 2) Children cannot change from one group to another;
- 3) If more than one group of children is cared for at one facility, each group must be in a separate room. Groups cannot mix with each other.
- 4) Childcare provided must remain solely with one group of children. They cannot rotate between groups.

Can home service workers who clean homes continue to provide their services?

Home service workers may provide their services if necessary for health and sanitation.

If I operate a non-essential business with a retail storefront, am I allowed to re-configure my business to deliver products to people's homes?

Yes.

I am a nanny. Will I get in trouble if I go to work?

The Order permits nannies and babysitters caring for a child in the child's own home to continue working.

QUESTIONS ABOUT TRAVEL

Can I get a ride in my favorite ride share/on demand service or a taxi?

Yes, but these services can only be used for "essential activities," to get to and from work to operate "essential businesses," or to provide "essential governmental functions," which are defined in the Order. Keep in mind that being in close quarters in a vehicle that has been shared with many others should be avoided if possible.

Can I take public transport (bus, subway, train)?

Yes, but public transit can only be used to perform "essential activities," to get to and from work to operate "essential businesses," or to maintain "essential governmental functions." When using public transport, you should maintain at least 6 feet distance from one another (2 or 3 steps away), including if you are on the bus or on trains.

Am I allowed to leave the areas covered by this Order to travel to/from a job outside the Bay Area? Does the Order allow me to leave the County?

Yes, but only to perform "essential activities," operate "essential businesses," or to maintain "essential governmental functions," as those terms are defined in the Order. Otherwise, the answer is no because that puts you and others in the community at risk.

I am currently on vacation outside the County—Does the Order allow me to return home?

Yes.

If I'm outside the county travelling for vacation or business, am I allowed to come home?

The Order permits you to return home.

I'm visiting and staying in a hotel, with family/friends, or in a short-term rental. What should I do? Can I go home?

Yes, you can leave the County for the purpose of returning home.

If I am currently outside the County, can I travel into the County?

You are subject to the same restrictions for travel as individuals currently in the County. You may travel into the County to perform "essential activities," work to operate "essential businesses," or maintain "essential governmental functions" as those terms are defined in the Order.

OTHER QUESTIONS

What if I'm in a line and there isn't six feet between me and others?

You should still try to maintain at least six feet between you and others. When that isn't possible for short periods, do your best to keep the duration short. And be sure when in line you don't sneeze or cough onto people. If needed, cough or sneeze into your shirt or into an elbow with clothing on, not into your hand.

What if my plumbing gets stopped up or there is another problem with necessary equipment at my home? How will I access those sorts of services?

Call your plumber or building manager. This Order allows service providers like plumbers, electricians, and exterminators to keep working and providing their services to the public. To obtain supplies for a DIY solution, you can also visit your hardware store, which is allowed to stay open under this Order.

What do I do about my loved one who needs care from me?

You are permitted to provide care or to help out with getting supplies for loved ones, even if they do not live in your household. But do not provide care or pick up supplies if you are sick and someone else can help them. If you are sick, please try to self-isolate or take other steps not to expose anyone else to your illness.

What happens if I don't comply with this Order?

This is a legally enforceable order issued under California law.

Why is this Order in place?

This Order is in place to address the ongoing spread of the virus that causes COVID-19 in Merced County. There is substantial community transmission of the virus, which is easily spread between people. One big challenge in controlling the transmission of the virus is that many people who have it don't have symptoms or have mild symptoms. But they can easily spread the virus even if they don't feel ill. And the virus lasts a long time on many surfaces (from hours to days).

Unfortunately, this virus can cause severe symptoms in some people and can also be fatal. Some who get the virus, especially those over 60 years old, those who have weak immune systems, and those with various medical conditions (see below for a full list), can end up with serious complications that include fever, pneumonia, and even in some instances death. There is no approved treatment or cure for COVID-19. That means that people who get very sick need medical intervention such as oxygen or help breathing.

Because the virus spreads so easily, without dramatic intervention like this Order, it would result in so many people needing medical attention in a hospital setting that our hospitals will be overwhelmed. We may not have enough beds or equipment to adequately care for the most seriously ill. And our health care workers and other first responders are also at risk, and if they get sick there are fewer people to provide health care and first response services. For those reasons, it is critical that we now do everything in our power to slow down the spread of the virus. Doing so will help to "flatten the curve" to slow down the spread of the virus and help our health care system not be overwhelmed. If this

succeeds, it means that there will be health care available for those who get sick with COVID-19 or who need emergency medical care for accidents, heart attacks, strokes, and other serious medical conditions.

We all have to do our part now to protect everyone in the community. The best way to do that is to “socially isolate” yourself at home to avoid further spread of the virus.

Note: These FAQs will continue to be updated. Please check back for updates and visit our website for up to date information on COVID-19 at www.countyofmerced.com/coronavirus

For more information on what the US Department of Homeland Security has identified as an Essential Worker, please visit <https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/CISA-Guidance-on-Essential-Critical-Infrastructure-Workers-1-20-508c.pdf> .