



April 2020

Highlights of Gov. Abbott's Plan to Reopen Texas

Yesterday Governor Abbott announced his strategy to re-open the state for business beginning on May 1, 2020. Following are highlights of his phased-in "Open Texas" plan along with other updates on the state's response to COVID-19.

The infection rates in Texas for COVID-19 have declined over the past 17 days. There are new cases, but not at the same steep increase rate and hospitalization and death rate. If this trend continues, the governor's plan calls for phase two of reopening Texas to begin on May 18.

In making his announcement, the governor also released three new executive orders from him that he says will supersede local ordinances. See below for links to those orders.

National Guard to Assist with Reopening Texas

Gov. Abbott has activated 3,000 members of the Texas National Guard to assist with the effort. They are opening 25 mobile testing sites across the state and three fixed testing sites (Houston, Huntsville and Kingsville). The state hopes to be able to test 25,000 individuals per day.

Unemployment Claims Continue to Climb

According to the latest reports, 1.9 million unemployment claims have been filed in Texas with 1.6 million of those claims having been processed. So far, \$2 billion has been paid to those unemployed workers.

Gov Abbott's Back to Work Plan

- 1) Stay home ordinance will expire on April 30th. The governor does not plan to extend it.
 - a. There is no requirement that any business re-open and anyone wanting to continue to follow the stay at home guidance may continue to stay at home.

- b. Gov. Abbott and state leaders strongly recommend that people wear masks, but there is no penalty for not wearing a mask. If a local jurisdiction requires masks, they cannot impose a penalty or fine for non-compliance.
- 2) Phased reopening consistent with CDC guidelines and safety standards will be in place for employers to re-open for business. Standards are based on data and doctor driven. (China and other areas of the far east are experiencing resurgence of coronavirus after reopening.)
- a. Phase 1 (May 1st)
 - i. Redouble efforts to protect most vulnerable Texans (people 65 and over).
 - 1. Must remain at home if possible
 - 2. Businesses must provide special hours for seniors
 - 3. Better infectious disease protocols at nursing homes/senior living facilities
 - ii. List of businesses to reopen in Phase 1 and a checklist for these businesses may be viewed here: (www.gov.texas.gov/opentexas):
 - 1. Restaurants, movie theaters and retail locations may reopen.
 - 2. No more than 25% occupancy rate. This supersedes all local orders.
 - iii. Museums and libraries can reopen at 25% rate. Interactive exhibits may not reopen.
 - iv. Sole proprietors may safely return to work.
 - v. Churches and places of worship can expand capacity.
 - vi. Outdoor sports that involve no more than 4 participants at one time (golf/tennis).
 - vii. Licensed healthcare professionals can return to work with certain conditions.
 - viii. Hospital must reserve 15% of capacity for COVID-19 cases.
 - ix. Restaurants, retail, shopping malls, museums and libraries, and movie theaters can expand capacity to 50% in counties meeting certain criteria with 5 or fewer COVID.
 - x. The state is still working on plans to reopen other businesses including:
 - 1. Barbershops, hair salons, bars and gyms (hoping to change this in Phase 2)
 - 2. Childcare providers for non-essential workers
 - 3. Summer camps
 - xi. Opening safely includes testing a tracing program. COVID-19 call center to go statewide (will build to 4,000 tracers in May) to box in expansion of COVID-19.
 - b. Phase 2 (Target is May 18, if no uptick of COVID since Phase 1)
 - i. Expands occupancy rate for businesses to 50%
 - ii. Outdoor sports that involve more participants may open during this phase.

c. Phase 3 (to be determined)

Additionally, the Governor issued an [Executive Order \(GA-20\)](#) to eliminate the mandatory 14-day quarantine period for individuals traveling from Louisiana. Under GA-20, the mandated 14-day quarantine for travelers from the following areas remains in place: California; Connecticut; New York; New Jersey; Washington; Atlanta, Georgia; Chicago, Illinois; Detroit, Michigan, and Miami, Florida.

View [Texans Helping Texans: The Governor's Report to Open Texas](#).

View the Governor's Executive Orders issued today:

- [GA-18](#): Relating to the expanded reopening of services as part of the safe, strategic plan to Open Texas in response to the COVID-19 disaster.
- [GA-19](#): Relating to hospital capacity during the COVID-19 disaster.
- [GA-20](#): Relating to expanding travel without restrictions as part of the safe, strategic plan to Open Texas in response to the COVID-19 disaster.

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