Office of the County Judge

Local Disaster Declaration for Public Health Emergency

COVID19

Directive #2

20 March 2020

Summary: A Declaration of Local State of Disaster due to Public Health Emergency associated with COVID19 has been issued by Bell County Judge David Blackburn. In accordance with the Declaration, this Directive #2 is being issued.

The virus that causes the 2019 Coronavirus disease (COVID19) is easily transmitted through person to person contact, especially in group settings, and it is essential that the spread of the virus be slowed to protect the ability of public and private health care providers to handle the influx of new patients and safeguard public health and safety.

Because of the risk that health care authorities have identified due to the rapid spread of the virus, and the need to protect the most vulnerable members of the community, this Directive #2 prohibits gatherings of persons of more than 10 persons anywhere in the County, under the specified terms and conditions set forth below, beginning at midnight tonight, March 20, 2020 and continuing until such time as a future Directive removes such prohibition.

For all gatherings and locations not included within this Directive, the Office of the County Judge and the Bell County Public Health District strongly recommends and urges actively practicing social distancing whenever and wherever possible.

It is the intent of this Directive for the terms and provisions to be interpreted and applied broadly and in accordance with the primary objective of limiting the number of people at gatherings to no more than 10 people and to achieve active social distancing.

This Directive replaces and supersedes all prior Directives.

Under the authority of Section 418.108, Texas Government Code, and Local Disaster Declaration of Bell County dated 18 March 2020, the following orders are hereby issued:

1. Public or private gatherings, as defined below, are prohibited anywhere in the County. Said gatherings are:
    a. A restaurant with or without drive-through services; drive-through restaurant; microbrewery, micro-distillery, or winery; however, any of these establishments may continue to provide take out, delivery or drive-through or drive-up services as may be allowed by law;
    b. A location with alcoholic beverage consumption for on-premise consumption, including a bar, lounge, or tavern or private club; and
    c. Indoor recreational facilities, including gyms, health clubs, indoor amusement facilities, including, bowling alleys, pool halls, movie theaters, and massage parlors.
2. Visitation of nursing homes or retirement or long-term care facilities, unless to provide critical assistance, is prohibited.
3. Schools shall temporarily close until 11:59 pm on April 3, 2020.
4. For purposes of this Directive, a 'gathering' is any indoor or outdoor event or convening, subject to the exceptions and clarifications below, that brings together or is likely to bring together ten (10) or more persons at the same time in a single room or other single confined or enclosed space, such as an auditorium, stadium, (indoor or outdoor), tent, arena, or event center, music venue, meeting hall, conference center, large cafeteria, or any other confined indoor or outdoor space. A 'confined' or 'enclosed' space includes any area that has a barrier such as a fence or railing or other barrier on more than one side of the area.
5. For purposes of clarity, a 'gathering' does not include the following, or other similar uses, so long as social distancing is being practiced:
    a. Spaces where ten (10) or more persons may be in transit or waiting for transit such as airports, bus stations, or terminals;
    b. Office spaces, public and private schools, child-care facilities, residences, or any type of temporary sheltering or housing;
    c. Grocery stores, convenience stores, shopping centers or malls, or other retail and business establishments where numbers might exceed 10 (ten) or more, but where it would be unusual for people to within six (6) feet of one another for extended periods; and
    d. Hospitals and medical facilities.
6. Failure to comply with this Directive is an offense punishable by a fine of up to $1,000 per day or confinement in jail for a term not to exceed 180 days.
7. This Directive shall be filed in the Office of the County Clerk and posted on the Bell County website. In addition, every owner, manager, or operator of any facility that is impacted by this Directive is encouraged to post a copy of this Directive onsite.

DIRECTED & ORDERED this the 20th day of March, 2020.

D. Blackburn, County Judge