Stay Home Except For Essential Needs
Contra Costa with Health Officers from the Bay Area have announced a Public Health Order that requires residents to stay home to limit the spread of the novel coronavirus, also known as COVID-19. This order is in effect until April 7, 2020. It may be extended depending on recommendations from public health officials.

This document was last updated on March 19 at 3:30 p.m.

What to do
Everyone should stay home except for essential needs, such as getting food, caring for a relative or friend, getting necessary health care, or going to an essential job. Vulnerable populations must stay home.

It is okay to go outside for walks if you are not in a group.

Read the Full Text of the Order

Why are we doing this?
This is a critical intervention to reduce harm from the spread of the coronavirus in our community.

All Bay Area Health Officers observed quickly mounting cases and serious illnesses across the region.

Now is the time to do everything we can to prevent the situation from getting much worse in a matter of days or weeks. Every hour counts. We need and appreciate the cooperation of everyone who lives and works in Contra Costa to act immediately. While this news may feel alarming, it is a necessary step to prevent a worsening situation. The patterns of the virus around the world, and in our own state, tell us that moving right now to maximize social distancing and restrict people gathering is the best way to fight the virus and save lives.

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
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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.

**Can the Order be changed?**
Yes. It was important to get this Order in place quickly given the spread of the virus in the Bay Area. However, it can and will be updated as conditions warrant. Please be sure to check the County Website at [cchealth.org/coronavirus](http://cchealth.org/coronavirus) regularly to learn about updates.

**What can I do? What's open?**
These essential services will remain open:

- County government services: Police stations, fire stations, hospitals/clinics and healthcare operations, and some city offices (check with individual cities to see what offices are open)
- Garbage/sanitation
- Public transportation (including Muni, BART, Caltrain)
- Utilities (water, power and gas)
- Gas stations
- Pharmacies
- Food: Grocery stores, farmers markets, food banks, convenience stores, take-out and delivery restaurants
- Hardware stores/plumbers/electricians and those who provide services necessary to maintaining the safety, sanitation, and essential operation of residences
- Banks
- Bicycle Shops
- Auto Repair Shops
- Community benefit organizations on a case-by-case basis
- Laundromats/laundry services
- Cemeteries
- Newspapers, television, radio, and other media services
- Food-delivery services

**What's closed?**
- Dine-in restaurants
- Bars and nightclubs
- Entertainment venues
What can't I do?
- You cannot engage in group activities in person with others.
- You cannot have dinner parties. You cannot invite friends over to your home to hang out.
- You cannot go to bars or nightclubs.
- You cannot go to a nail salon or get your hair cut by a stylist or barber.
- You cannot go shopping for non-essential goods.
- You cannot take unnecessary trips on public transport or in your car or motorbike.

Where does this apply?
This is in effect across the Bay Area, including in Marin, Sonoma, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Contra Costa, and Alameda Counties and the City of Berkeley.

I am a member of a vulnerable population – do I need to report to work even if I work for an essential business?
If you are a member of a vulnerable population you should not be outside for any reason unless to see a doctor. If you have any questions you should contact your healthcare provider.

Vulnerable populations include anyone: Over the age of 60, having chronic medical conditions (heart disease, lung disease, kidney disease, cancer, diabetes, weak immune system)

Is this mandatory or is it just guidance?
It is mandatory. This Order is a legal Order issued under the authority of California law. You are required to comply, and it is a misdemeanor crime not to follow the order (although the intent is not for anyone to get in trouble).

What is the difference between “sheltering at home” and “social distancing”? 
Sheltering in place means sheltering at home – this is a more rigorous form of social distancing. There are some differences.
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**Sheltering at home means:**
- Stay home
- Only go out for “essential activities,” to work for an “essential business,” or for “essential travel” as those terms are defined in the Order, and as discussed further below
- Stay 6 feet or more away from others
- No gatherings

The other principles of social distancing will continue to apply whenever feasible. These include washing hands, using hand sanitizer, disinfecting surfaces, not going out if sick, and staying at least six feet away from others.

**What if I need to get healthcare from my medical provider?**
Contact your health care provider to see if they are providing regular services. Some services, especially elective procedures, may be postponed or canceled.

**What should I do if I’m sick and need to go to the hospital?**
Do not go to the emergency room of a hospital unless you are having an actual emergency. If you are feeling sick, please first call your doctor, a nurse hotline, or an urgent care center.

If you must go to a hospital, walk or drive yourself there if possible. You want to try to avoid exposing others to any germs you have, especially if you are seriously ill. If you have Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) like a surgical mask or N-95 mask, you can wear that to prevent exposing others. If you don’t have that, you could use a temporary method such as wrapping a clean scarf around your mouth and nose to try to reduce droplets when you cough and sneeze. Although this is not an approved method, it is something you can do to avoid exposing others. Just do the best you can.

**Can I leave home to visit friends or family members if there is no urgent need?**
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 deliveries from online stores? Can I order from online stores?
Yes. The mail and other delivery services to your home can continue to function, as can food delivery services.

Yes, you can place more orders from online stores. Businesses that deliver goods or services directly to residences are essential businesses that may continue to operate.

Can I use ride share or on-demand service or a taxi?
Yes, but only for essential travel. Do your best to take social distancing precautions: cover your mouth and nose if you cough or sneeze, use hand sanitizer, and wash your hands before and after rides, etc.

I am an Uber/Lyft Driver, can I still work?
Yes, but only when providing rides for essential activities or providing rides to people performing essential government functions, essential infrastructure or essential business.

Can I take public transport (bus, subway, train)?
Yes, but only for essential travel. Public transit will continue to operate on a limited basis. When using public transport, you should maintain at least 6 feet, two to three 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.

If I am currently outside of 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.
If you live in the County but have left for school-related or work-related reasons, you are allowed to return.

**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 the drug store deliver your prescription medicine to your home.

**How will I get food and medicines I need if I must stay in my home?**

The Order specifically allows people to leave their home to buy food, purchase medicine, and purchase other necessary items. It also directs businesses selling those items to remain open, and allows employees of those businesses to keep working and to ensure those businesses are operating. You can also have food and other goods delivered to your home.

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

No. Continue to buy normal quantities of these items on the same schedule you normally do. This will ensure that there is enough for everyone.

**Can charitable feeding sites operate?**

Yes, if they have a current health permit or registration and serve food in a manner consistent with our interim COVID-19 guidance for restaurants, grocery stores and other food facilities.

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

Generally, you should postpone these if possible. If it can wait, then wait. Check with your provider of routine care 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.
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 sure that you protect them and you 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?
Generally, no. Check with the healthcare facility about their visitation policies.
If you need to know more, please contact the facility you want to visit by phone before you leave. This is difficult, but it is necessary in order to protect hospital staff and other patients.

Can I host or attend a viewing for a deceased loved one?
Yes, however, the family member of the deceased should schedule by appointment only either one person or one household at a time. For more information visit the National Funeral Directors Association Guidelines.

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. Please also contact 211 if you do not have family or friends who can drop off food and supplies, the operators can connect you with local aide to assist.

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, which many schools are doing.
Is childcare available?
Childcare facilities can provide services that enable employees who exempted from the health officer order to go 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.

Can I still go to church, synagogue, or mosque?
No. Places of worship have not been exempted as essential activities under the order. Places of worship can still provide services listed in the order as essential such as food banks and funerals.

Can I go to the courts or jails for visitation?
To prevent the spread of COVID-19 into Contra Costa County detention facilities, the Office of the Sheriff has temporarily canceled all professional, official, social visits at Martinez, West County, and Marsh Creek Detention Facilities. However, attorney visits will continue with access to non-contact visit rooms only. The cancellation will be reassessed as conditions change.

Can I leave home to exercise?
Yes, if your exercise is both outdoors and not in close contact with other people. Otherwise, no. Fitness and exercise gyms are not permitted to operate.

You can go for walks, go to the park, and engage in other similar activities, but should maintain social distance (i.e. be more than six feet away from persons who are not part of your household) when on walks and in parks to avoid spread of the virus. 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.
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” on site 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:**
- The minimum necessary activities to maintain the value of the business’s inventory, ensure security, or for related functions.
- The minimum necessary activities to facilitate employees of the business being able to continue to work remotely from their residences.

Your employees can also work from home if their jobs are ones that can be performed remotely.

For more information regarding disaster unemployment assistance, visit the state website: [Employment Developmental Department](#).

For information about disaster assistance for small businesses, visit [the U.S. Small Business Administration](#).

What is the impact on construction projects in Contra Costa County?
So long as social distancing practices are used during construction, certain projects are allowed. All residential construction projects that are partly completed can continue to completion in order to ensure health and safety. The order prohibits new construction projects unless they are adding to the supply of our county’s housing stock (i.e. building a second unit, building a new home, etc.) or maintaining the habitability of homes in order to avoid displacement of residents. Business construction projects related to maintaining or upgrading essential business, government or healthcare infrastructure are also allowed to go forward.

While the County Health officer issued the order, local building officials in towns, cities and the county will be handling day-to-day implementation. The county will continue to update these frequently asked questions from cities, businesses and individuals as they arise.
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Will the county still be accepting applications to build new residences?
Yes.

I run a construction company that builds affordable and market rate housing. Can we continue to build new units?
Yes. Creation of new housing units, including both market rate and affordable housing units, is essential. The order allows construction projects to proceed and new ones to begin if they contribute new residential housing to meet the county’s critical need for additional housing supply.

I am midway through a remodel. Can my construction project continue?
Yes. Residential renovation projects of any kind that are currently underway may continue if necessary to a safe, sanitary and functional home. Likewise, residential remodeling projects that are partly completed may continue if delaying completion would pose a safety, security or sanitation risk to residents or impact the habitability of the residence.

I have a contractor scheduled to begin a remodel next week. Can I go ahead with this project?
You must defer your remodel or renovation project unless it is necessary to restore your home to a safe, sanitary and habitable space..

Is general commercial construction allowed?
Unless your construction project is a healthcare facility, it is only allowed if it is necessary to the operation or maintenance of “essential infrastructure” or an “essential business” as defined in the order. Projects already under construction that are not “essential infrastructure” or “essential business” must be suspended but will be allowed to proceed to a point necessary to prevent damage to materials that a delay in finishing would create or to make the site safe and secure.
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**Should I notify the authorities or law enforcement if I see someone not following the shelter-in-place order?**
You can, but keep in mind that the goal of this health order is not to get people into trouble. Be a role model and follow the order while encouraging others to do the same. Our law enforcement partners say their goal is to enforce and educate, not incarcerate.

If necessary, concerns about possible violations of the Health Officer Order can be reported to the Sheriff's Office non-emergency line at (925) 646-2441 or your local city/town police department non-emergency line. Please do not call 911 unless you are reporting an emergency.

**Can I still buy cannabis from dispensaries?**
Only if it is from a licensed medical-cannabis dispensary. Recreational cannabis stores will be closed while the order is in effect.

**My employer is forcing me to work during the duration of this Order? How do I report my employer?**
If you have a labor relations issue or dispute you will need to contact the Department of Industrial Relations – Labor Commissioner. [The local office](#) is in Oakland.

*Note: These FAQs will continue to be updated. Please check back for updates and clarifications.*

*For more information and update, please visit us at [cchealth.org/coronavirus](#).*