

COVID-19: Shelter in Place and Curfews

On March 31, 2020, Gov. Abbott issued an [Executive Order Implementing Essential Services and Activities Protocols](#) which effectively acts as a statewide shelter in place order.

- These measures are in effect statewide until April 30, 2020.
- Schools will remain closed to in-person classroom attendance through May 4, 2020.

Visit your county and city website for COVID-19 details and updates.

What is a “Shelter in Place” Order?

It’s an order issued by government that requires people to stay at home. Under the new executive order, every person in Texas are ordered to minimize social gatherings and minimize in-person contact with those not living in the same household, except where necessary to provide or get “essential services.”

What is a curfew?

A curfew is an order issued by a local government that prohibits leaving your home between certain hours (for example, 10 pm to 5 am). Some Texas counties are ordering curfews, but the new statewide order does not. To the extent your local or county orders do, those still apply. Check your local city or county website for curfew information.

Can I still go to work?

No, unless you work in a business that provides “essential services.” Though each local government may have a different definition of “essential,” the new executive order refers to [guidance](#) from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) maintains a [list of businesses](#) considered essential, and can grant permission to businesses that want to be added. Generally, the list of businesses providing essential services still include:

- grocery stores
- gas stations
- banks
- pharmacies
- healthcare facilities

Services provided by first responders, public transportation, trash collection and similar services are deemed essential. Nonessential businesses closed under the order include gyms, massage businesses, tattoo and piercing studios, and cosmetology salons.

Can I still go to church?

Under Gov. Abbott’s executive order, religious worship is an essential service. Churches are encouraged to conduct their services remotely, and in-person meetings must follow the federal social-distancing guidelines. Nearly all congregations statewide closed their doors voluntarily weeks ago, and moved to remote services to protect the health and safety of their congregants.

Can I go to the park?

You can still go outside for exercise, pet walking, cycling, jogging, hunting and fishing, as long as social distancing guidelines are followed – generally keeping a distance of about 6 feet apart from others. Many national and state parks are closed or partially closed to the public, and some local municipalities have closed their parks as well. Check with the park before going.

Can I still take a rideshare, taxi or bus?

Overall, the new executive order did not provide guidance on rideshare and taxis during the shelter period. Many public transit systems are operating, but on a limited schedule. Most require passengers to use the rear door when boarding and exiting, except those with mobility issues. Seating is spaced to avoid near contact.

Are bars and restaurants closed?

All restaurant dining rooms, food courts and bars are closed until at least April 30, subject to extension. Many are open only for drive-thru, take out or curbside food delivery. Most food delivery services (for example, Door Dash, Favor) can still make home deliveries.

Can I visit a family member in the nursing home?

No, the statewide order prohibits Texans from visiting nursing homes, state-supported living centers, assisted living facilities, or long-term care facilities UNLESS it is to provide critical assistance. To learn more about critical assistance, [you can check out guidance from the Texas Health and Human Services Commission](#).

What happens if I violate a “Shelter in Place” Order?

It depends on the local order. Violating a statewide order can result in a fine of up to \$1000 and up to six months in jail. Local orders may carry similar punishments. Right now, the goal of most law enforcement seems to be to encourage voluntary compliance rather than issuing citations; however, some counties and towns have gone so far as to set up checkpoints, arrest violators, and/or issue citations.

How long do “Shelter in Place” Orders last?

As of right now, the statewide order is set to expire on April 30, but it is subject to extension. Local orders also include time frames for when they will end. Check the state and your local government websites regularly for updates.