



COVID-19 F.A.Q.

Frequently Asked Questions

On Tuesday, May, 5, 2020, Texas Governor Greg Abbott issued Executive Order No. GA-21 relating to the expanded reopening of services as part of the plan to open Texas in response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

To the extent at which the governor's order and Mayor Pete Saenz' Amended Emergency Order 5, signed and issued on May 7, 2020, do not conflict, both orders remain in effect within the city limits of Laredo, Texas.

For details, please refer to:

1. Executive Order GA-21 - <https://lrl.texas.gov/scanned/govdocs/Greg%20Abbott/2020/GA-21.pdf>
2. and Laredo's Amended Emergency Order 5 - https://www.cityoflaredo.com/assets/05-06-20_Amended_Emergency_Ordinance_5.pdf

Q: Are we now permitted to socially gather?

A: No. Despite the common misconception that the Governor's Stay Home Order was to expire on Friday, May 1' 2020, Executive Order GA-18 followed by GA 21 has the same Stay Home language as prior Executive Order GA-16. "Every person in Texas **shall**, except where necessary to provide or obtain essential services or reopened services, **minimize social gatherings and minimize in-person contact with people who are not in the same household.**" This means that under existing city, county, and state stay home orders, social gatherings of any size are *not permitted* and people may leave their homes *only* to engage in an essential business, reopened service, essential travel, or to participate in a permitted activity.

Q: Does the City of Laredo's Stay Home/Work Safe Order still apply?

A: Yes. The City Council's April 20, 2020 "Stay Home" Order is still in effect. Governor's Order GA18 followed by GA 21 only modified the City's order in the following two ways: (1) It added additional businesses and services that people are permitted to leave their homes to access (reopened businesses); and (2) it provided that the City cannot impose a civil or criminal penalty for violations of the covering of the nose/mouth requirement.

Q: Do I still have to wear a face covering/mask?

A: Yes. Although penalties will not be imposed on individuals for failure to cover your nose and mouth, face coverings remain a city mandate and each citizen’s responsibility because they protect both you and the public. Facial Coverings: (1) decrease virus spread by infected individuals; (2) decrease new infections by uninfected individuals; (3) prevent airborne virus particles being inhaled from the outside; and (4) and limit hand to face contact.

Q: Can businesses require customers to wear masks?

A: Yes, all businesses are encouraged to establish its own policies for requiring face covering requirements in order to protect its employees and customers.

Q: What businesses are permitted to reopen?

A: Under the Governor’s Order dated April 27, 2020, several businesses were permitted to open on May 1, 2020. Businesses that could open on May 1 under 25 percent occupancy include:

- **Indoor retail stores**
- **Shopping malls**
- **Movie theatres**
- **Dine-in restaurants.** (If the restaurant has less than 51 percent of its gross receipts from the sale of alcoholic beverages and is not required to post the 51 percent sign required by Texas law as determined by the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission)
 - the occupancy limits do not apply to customers seated in outdoor areas of the restaurant; and
 - valet services are prohibited except for vehicles with placards or plates for disabled parking.

Under the Governor’s Order dated May 5, 2020, 2020, several more business were allowed to reopen and include:

- **Wedding venues** and the services required to conduct weddings; provided, however, that for weddings held indoors other than at a church, congregation, or house of worship, the facility may operate at up to 25 percent of the total listed occupancy of the facility.
- **Wedding reception services,** for facilities that operate at up to 25 percent of the total listed occupancy of the facility; provided, however, that the occupancy limits do not apply to the outdoor areas of a wedding reception or to outdoor wedding receptions.

Starting on Friday, May 8, 2020, the following are added to the list:

- **Cosmetology salons, hair salons, barber shops, nail salons/shops, and other establishments where licensed cosmetologists or barbers practice their trade;** (provided, however, that all such salons, shops, and establishments must ensure at least six feet of social distancing between operating work stations)
- **Tanning salons;** provided, however, that all such salons must ensure at least six feet of social distancing between operating work stations.
- **Swimming pools;** provided, however, that (i) indoor swimming pools may operate at up to 25 percent of the total listed occupancy of the pool facility; (ii) outdoor swimming pools may operate at up to 25 percent of normal operating limits as determined by the pool operator. **City pools shall remain closed at this time.**

Starting on Monday, May 18, 2020, the following are added to the list:

- **Services provided by office workers** in offices that operate at up to the greater of: (i) five individuals; or (ii) 25 percent of the total office workforce; provided, however, that the individuals maintain appropriate social distancing.
- **Manufacturing services,** for facilities that operate at up to 25 percent of the total listed occupancy of the facility.
- **Gyms and exercise facilities and classes** that operate at up to 25 percent of the total listed occupancy of the gym or exercise facility; provided, however, that locker rooms and shower facilities must remain closed, but restrooms may open.

The City requires, to the extent feasible, that all persons practice social distancing and use face coverings when engaging in essential daily activities and performing or obtaining essential services and reopened services.

Q: What is NOT allowed to be open?

A: As per the governor's Executive Order GA-21, people shall avoid visiting bars, massage establishments, tattoo studios, piercing studios, sexually-oriented businesses, or interactive amusement venues such as bowling alleys, video arcades, amusement parks, water parks, or splash parks.

Q: How is the 25 percent occupancy limit determined?

A: The Governor's order limits the occupancy of a reopened service to 25 percent of its total listed occupancy. Occupancy is defined as the maximum occupant load set by the City of Laredo except that staff members/employees are not included in determining operating levels except for non-essential manufacturing service providers and services provided by office workers.

Q: How will the 25 percent occupancy limit be enforced?

A: It will be enforced by the Laredo Police Department, Laredo Fire Department, and Laredo Code Enforcement. The first step of the enforcement process is always education. Thereafter, violations may result in criminal penalties and revocation of a Certificate of Occupancy. If you believe a business is not complying with the 25 percent capacity, you may refer your concern to the City by calling 3-1-1.

Q: Are City facilities going to open?

A: City Hall is currently still closed to the public. In an effort to effectuate the Governor’s Executive Order, limited parts of city parks have opened to the public. These include tracks, trails, baseball fields, soccer fields, dog parks, golf courses, and tennis courts. City Manager will determine the appropriate time to open additional City owned facilities based on the available data concerning the containment of the COVID-19 virus.

Q: May a person engage in outdoor sports?

A: Individuals may engage in outdoor sports, provided that the sports do not include contact with other participants, and no more than four participants play the sport at any time. Individuals engaged in outdoor activity shall continue to comply with social distancing requirements.

Q: May all employees of a reopened business/establishment go back to work?

A: Yes. However, employers of businesses that are permitted to reopen will determine the number of employees that will return to work.

Q: Are we permitted to have religious services?

A: It is still strongly recommended that religious services continue to be provided remotely, including outdoor drive-up services where individuals remain in their vehicle. However, in-person religious services held in a church, congregation, or place of worship is considered an essential service and is permitted under the City, County and State Orders. All in-person religious services should be conducted in accordance with the *Revised Guidelines for Houses of Worship During the COVID-19 Crisis*, as promulgated by the Attorney General and Governor issued on April 21, 2020.

Q: Are music, dance, karate and other classes permitted?

A: Yes, as per the Governor’s order GA-21, exercise and other classes are beginning May 18 at 25 percent of their maximum occupancy and with appropriate social distancing and hygiene/disinfecting practices are being followed.

Q: Is non-essential travel still prohibited?

A: Yes. The City Council’s April 20, 2020 “Stay Home” Order is still in effect. Governor’s Order GA-21 identifies additional businesses and services that people may leave their homes to access (reopened businesses). Thus, in addition to engaging in essential businesses, activities and travel, individuals may also make trips to obtain or provide the reopened services listed in the Governor’s order and to participate in permitted outdoor activity. ***OTHERWISE, INDIVIDUALS STILL MUST STAY AT HOME.***

Q: Is the curfew still in effect?

A: Yes. A curfew is still in effect. No one should be engaging in non-essential travel or activities between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m. Violation of this curfew may result in a fine.

Q: So what else changed?

A: Nothing. The order issued by the Governor does not change any other of the current requirements issued by the City of Laredo and Local Health Authority. However, these Orders are subject to constant change by the City Council and Local Health Authority to meet the public health and welfare needs of the community, as well as to comply with the most recent Executive Orders of the Governor.