

Shelter in Place – Order of the Health Officer FAQ

When does this Health Order become effective?

This Order goes into effect at 12 a.m. on March 20, 2020 and will continue to be in effect until 11:59 p.m. on April 9, 2020, or until it is extended, rescinded, superseded, or amended by the Health Officer.

What does this Order do?

This order requires that most people stay home starting no later than 12:01 a.m. on Friday, March 20, 2020, unless they are engaged in certain “Essential Activities” which are discussed more below. For most people, this means that you and the people you live with should remain at home. You are allowed to leave your home for specified reasons to make sure you have necessities such as food and medical supplies. You are also allowed to go outside to take care of pets, go on a walk, and just to get outside, so long as you do not congregate in a group and maintain at least six feet of distance between you and other people. If you are sick you should self-isolate, including, to the extent you can, from others you live with.

What does it mean to “shelter in place”?

The term “shelter in place” means to stay in your home and not leave unless necessary for one of the designated exceptions listed in the Order.

In other words, everyone should stay home to slow the spread of the virus. You should limit your movements to essential outings.

Some reasons you would leave your home are to get food, to get a prescription medication, to see a doctor, to go to work if your work is essential as defined in this Order, to take your child(ren) to and from child care if that child care facility is authorized under this Order, and to help people you care for get the things they need to live and be healthy and safe (see more below).

What is the difference between “sheltering in place” and “social distancing”?

Sheltering in place is a more stringent form of social distancing.

Sheltering in place means: Stay home and only go out for “essential activities,” to work for an “essential business,” or for “essential travel” as those terms are defined in the Order.

Social distancing means: Stay six feet or more away from others and do not attend or participate in public or private gatherings.

Am I allowed to leave my home while this Order is in effect?

The intent of this Order is to ensure that people remain in their residences and minimize social interactions outside of their immediate family unit. You may leave your residence for reasons specified in the Order.

What activities are considered essential?

Getting necessary services or supplies for yourself and your family, household members, and pets, or delivering services or supplies to others. For example, you can purchase food, medicine, pet food and supplies, and other household consumer products, and items that are necessary to maintain the safety, sanitation, and essential operation of residences.

Going outside to walk, hike, cycle, or run while staying at least six feet away from other people.
Working to provide essential products and services at an Essential Business. Caring for a family member or pet in another household.

Why is this Order in place?

This Order is in place to address the ongoing spread of the virus that causes COVID-19 within the County and throughout the state. Due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus in the general public, which is now a pandemic according to the World Health Organization, there is a public health emergency throughout the County. It is essential to slow virus transmission as much as possible to protect the most vulnerable and to prevent the health care system from being overwhelmed. One proven way to slow the transmission is to limit interactions among people to the greatest extent practicable. By reducing the spread of the COVID-19 virus, this Order helps preserve critical and limited health care capacity in the County.

What happens if I don't comply with this Order?

This Order is a legal Order issued under the authority of California law. You are required to comply, and it is a misdemeanor not to follow the Order punishable by fine, imprisonment or both (although the intent is not for anyone to get in trouble). It is critical for everyone to follow the Order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and protect themselves, their loved ones, friends, neighbors and the whole community.

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. We need to all do our part to protect our friends and loved ones — and right now, avoiding non-essential visits is the best thing we can do.

How will I get food and medicines I need if I must “shelter in place” in my home?

The Order specifically allows people to leave their home to buy food, purchase medicine, and purchase necessary items. It also encourages businesses selling those items to remain open and allows employees of those businesses to keep working.

What kinds of businesses are considered essential, according to the Order of the Health Officer?

The Order of the Health Officer lists the following essential businesses:

1. Healthcare Operations and Essential Infrastructure (see additional information below)
2. Grocery stores, certified farmers' markets, farm and produce stands, supermarkets, food banks, convenience stores, and other establishments engaged in the retail sale of: canned food, dry

goods, fresh fruits and vegetables, pet food and supplies, fresh meats, fish, and poultry, and any other household consumer products (such as cleaning and personal care products).

3. This includes stores that sell groceries and also sell other non-grocery products, and products necessary to maintaining the safety, sanitation, and essential operation of residences.
4. Farmers' markets shall comply with California Department of Public Health (CDPH) Guidance regarding Retail Food, Beverage, and Other Related Service Venues issued March 16, 2020;
5. Agriculture, food, and beverage cultivation, processing, and distribution, including but not limited to, farming, ranching, fishing, dairies, creameries, wineries and breweries in order to preserve inventory and production;
6. Businesses that are necessary to support agriculture, food, and beverage cultivation, processing, and distribution;
7. Businesses that provide food, shelter, and social services, and other necessities of life for economically disadvantaged or otherwise needy individuals;
8. Newspapers, television, radio, and other media services;
9. Gas stations and auto-supply, auto-repair, and related facilities;
10. Banks and related financial institutions;
11. Hardware stores;
12. Plumbers, electricians, exterminators, and other service providers who provide services that are necessary to maintaining the safety, sanitation, and essential operation of residences, Essential Activities, and Essential Businesses;
13. Businesses that support or provide Essential Infrastructure;
14. Businesses providing mailing and shipping services, including post office boxes;
15. Educational institutions—including public and private K-12 schools, colleges, and universities—for purposes of facilitating distance learning or performing essential functions, provided that social distancing of six-feet per person is maintained to the greatest extent possible;
16. Laundromats, dry cleaners, and laundry service providers;
17. Restaurants and other facilities that prepare and serve food, but only for drive-thru, delivery, or carry out. Schools and other entities that typically provide free food services to students or members of the public may continue to do so under the Order on the condition that the food is provided to students or members of the public on a pick-up and take-away basis only. Schools and other entities that provide food services under this exemption shall not permit the food to be eaten at the site where it is provided, or at any other gathering site. Food trucks shall comply with CDPH Guidance regarding Retail Food, Beverage, and Other Related Service Venues issued March 16, 2020;
18. Businesses that supply products needed for people to work from home;
19. Businesses that supply other essential businesses with the support or supplies necessary to operate;
20. Businesses that ship or deliver groceries, food, goods or services directly to residences;
21. Airlines, taxis, and other private transportation providers providing transportation services necessary for Essential Activities and other purposes expressly authorized in this Order;
22. Home-based care for seniors, adults, or children;
23. Residential facilities and shelters for seniors, adults, and children;
24. Professional services, such as legal or accounting services, when necessary to assist in compliance with legally mandated activities;

- a. Childcare facilities providing services that enable employees exempted in the Order to work as permitted. To the extent possible, childcare facilities must operate under the following mandatory conditions:
- b. 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).
- c. Children shall not change from one group to another.
- d. 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.
- e. Childcare providers shall remain solely with one group of children.

What does it mean to provide “Essential Infrastructure”?

People may perform work necessary to the operation and maintenance of essential infrastructure including but not limited to public works construction, construction of housing (in particular affordable housing or housing for homeless individuals), airport operations, water, sewer, gas, electrical, oil refining, roads and highways, public transportation, solid waste collection, internet service, and telecommunication systems provided they can carry out those services in compliance with social distancing requirements.

What about first responders?

All first responders, emergency management personnel, emergency dispatchers, court personnel, and law enforcement are exempt from this Order.

Is this Health Order mandatory or is it just guidance?

This Order is mandatory. All persons and other entities are required to comply if they do not fall within the exemptions that are specified in the Order. It is critical for everyone to follow the Order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and protect themselves, their loved ones, friends, neighbors and the whole community.

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

Generally, you should postpone these if possible. Check with your provider of routine care for specific guidance. They may cancel services. You should not expose yourself or others for health care or maintenance care that can wait a few weeks.

What medical and health-related activities are considered essential?

People may obtain services at any hospital, clinic, dentist, pharmacy, pharmaceutical or biotechnology company, other healthcare facility, healthcare supplier, home healthcare service, mental health provider, and any related healthcare service. This DOES NOT include fitness, exercise gyms, nail salons, spas and other facilities.

What do I do if I need to obtain medical cannabis?

Licensed cannabis businesses will remain open, but shall operate only for the purpose of providing medical cannabis and only via curbside pickup or delivery.

What if my pet needs access to care?

You are able to seek veterinary care for your pets.

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

No. You will continue to be able to purchase these items whenever you need them. Grocery stores, pharmacies and hardware stores will remain open. To ensure there is enough for everyone, please continue to buy normal quantities of these items on the same schedule you normally do.

Can I still get mail and deliveries?

Yes. You will still be able to get mail and other deliveries at your home.

Can I still order the things I need online and have them delivered to my residence?

Yes. The Order identifies businesses that deliver goods or services directly to residences as “essential businesses” that may continue to operate.

Can I get my prescriptions or other health care supplies? 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.

Can I visit loved ones in the hospital, nursing home, skilled nursing facility, or other residential care facility?

Generally, no. Existing Orders of the Health Officer addressing this emergency prohibit non-necessary visitation to these kinds of facilities. Please contact the facility you want to visit by phone before you visit to inquire about the status of visits. This is difficult, but it is necessary in order to protect hospital staff and other patients.

Are non-profit organizations allowed to continue operating?

If they provide essential services as described in the other, then yes, they can and should continue providing those services. This would include non-profits operating food pantries, providing housing for homeless residents, and many other critical services.

Where does this Order apply?

This Order is in effect in all of Humboldt County.

I run an “Essential Business,” as defined by the Order. Do I need to get an official letter of authorization from the County to operate?

No. If your business is in the list of Essential Businesses provided in the Order, then you may operate it. You do not need to obtain any specific authorization from the County to do so.

Can I leave home to go to my church, synagogue, or mosque?

No. For your safety as well as the safety of your fellow worshippers, we need to help each other fight the spread of COVID-19 by staying at home. Places of worship may offer remote access to services, such as by emails, video streaming, or teleconference.

Am I allowed to leave the areas covered by this Order in order to travel to/from a job outside the County? Does the Order allow me to leave the County?

Yes, but only to perform “essential activities,” operate or work in “essential businesses,” or to maintain “essential governmental functions,” as those terms are defined in the Order. Individuals engaged in any “essential travel” must comply with all Social Distancing Requirements as defined in the Order. Otherwise, all travel is prohibited.

Why are we doing this?

This is a critical intervention to reduce harm from the spread of the coronavirus in our community. There are cases of community transmission of the virus in other communities, which is easily spread between people.

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. If we do not take steps to slow the spread, we may not have enough beds or equipment to adequately care for the most seriously ill. 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.

If this succeeds, it means that there will be health care available for those who get sick with COVID-19 or who need emergency medical care for accidents, heart attacks, strokes, and other routine medical conditions. The Order also protects everyone’s ability to seek emergency health care when needed.

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 Humboldt County to act immediately.

Can I leave home to exercise?

If you will be outdoors and not in close contact with other people, yes. Otherwise, no. Fitness centers, exercise gyms, recreational centers, golf courses, and public pools are not permitted to operate.

Are Humboldt County Parks open during the Shelter in Place Order

Yes. All Humboldt County parks, trails and beaches remain open for day use so the community can engage in self-directed outdoor exercise (hiking, walking, biking) while following social distancing and personal hygiene guidelines to avoid the spread of the virus. However, camping and social gatherings will not be allowed while the Order is in effect. Parking fees at county regional parks are waived until further notice.

Can I go out to do laundry or have my laundry done?

Yes. Laundromats, dry cleaners, and laundry service providers are considered “Essential Businesses” and you may use their services as long as you follow social distancing and personal hygiene guidelines while doing so.

Can I get a ride in my favorite ride share/on demand service or a taxi?

Yes, but these services can only be used for “essential activities,” to get to and from work to operate “essential businesses,” or to provide “essential governmental functions,” which are defined in the Order. Keep in mind that being in close quarters in a vehicle that has been shared with many others should be avoided if possible.

If I’m outside the county travelling for vacation or business, am I allowed to come home?

Yes. The Order permits you to return home.