

MEDIA RELEASE

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Orange County to Begin Phased-in Lifting of Restrictions at 5 p.m. May 8

HILLSBOROUGH, N.C. May 6, 2020 — Orange County transitioned into Phase 1 of Governor Roy Cooper’s re-opening plan on May 8, 2020, with one exception: mass gatherings in Orange County will continue to be limited to 10 people through June 30. According to Governor Cooper, restrictions will be lifted in three phases, with the first phase beginning at 5:00 p.m. on Friday, May 8. The state of emergency for Orange County, Carrboro, Chapel Hill, and Hillsborough will be extended.

Residents have been following stay-at-home orders in place since March 27 to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Through 5 p.m. May 8, the orders permit leaving home only for essential needs, such as food, medicine, outdoor exercise and to provide help to a loved one.

The governor’s new executive order continues stay-at-home guidance with some modifications. In the first phase of reopening, people will be allowed to leave home for commercial activity and more businesses will be open. Restrictions to encourage social distancing will continue.

Orange County Board of Commissioners Chair Penny Rich said, “Strict measures have been in place over the last six weeks to slow the spread of the virus COVID-19, and to protect the public. We will continue to make decisions based on science and recommendations from the state, as well as the Orange County Health Director.”

Orange County Health Director Quintana Stewart said, “The stay at home order thus far has been a tremendous group effort that has achieved its goal of slowing the spread of the virus in our community. By slowly easing restrictions in phases we can make sure that we have sustained hard evidence that things are getting better.”

Easing Restrictions in Phase One

Phase One of the reopening plan allows more businesses to open, such as clothing stores, sporting goods stores, book shops, houseware stores and other retailers. Any open stores must provide education to employees to combat this infection and implement:

- Appropriate employee and consumer social distancing.
- Enhanced hygiene and cleaning protocols.
- Symptom screening of employees.
- Accommodations for vulnerable workers.

Gatherings will continue to be limited to fewer than 10 people, but parks that have been closed subject to the same gathering limitation will now be allowed to open. Playgrounds will remain closed. Outdoor exercise will continue to be encouraged.

In public spaces where 6 feet of distancing isn't possible, face coverings will still be recommended. Employers will be encouraged to continue teleworking policies, and long-term care facilities and other congregant care settings will continue rigorous restrictions.

Offices of the county and towns will not open to the public in Phase One. Timelines for reopening will be announced at a later date.

Guidance for Businesses

Highlights of Phase One include:

- Any retail business may open at 50% capacity. Businesses will be required to practice social distancing, perform frequent cleanings, provide hand sanitizer when available, screen workers for symptoms and more.
- Certain businesses will remain closed, including bars, personal care businesses, entertainment venues, and gyms. Restaurants may only continue to serve customers for drive-through, takeout and delivery.
- Teleworking will still be encouraged for businesses that can practice it.
- People may leave their homes for commercial activity at any business that is open.

The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services has created materials to help businesses navigate Phase One, including:

- Checklist for Business Owners
- Interim Guidance for Owners, Staff, and Patrons of Businesses
- Symptom Screening Checklist
- Templates to Meet Required Signage

Flushing Guidance

Orange Water and Sewer Authority and the Town of Hillsborough have created water system flushing guidance for any facility that has been closed for more than a few days or has been operating at reduced capacity.

Water systems and devices in such buildings should be flushed to ensure stale water is removed and fresh water with disinfectant is available. This reestablishes water quality and prevents waterborne illness. It includes all water-using appliances, like ice machines and dishwashers, and all water treatment devices, like filters and water softeners. The disinfectant added to drinking water begins to dissipate over time and pathogens can begin to grow.

Town of Hillsborough, Flush Water Lines in Vacant, Underused Buildings:

<https://assets.hillsboroughnc.gov/media/documents/public/water-system-flushing-for-buildings-and-homes.pdf>

Town of Hillsborough, FAQ: Preparing Buildings for Reopening, Ensuring Water Quality: <https://assets.hillsboroughnc.gov/media/documents/public/faq-preparing-buildings-for-reopening-ensuring-water-quality.pdf>

OWASA, Preparing Your Building for Reopening: <https://www.owasa.org/flushing-guidance-covid-19/>

Helpful Links

- What is new in Phase One: <https://files.nc.gov/governor/documents/files/Phase-1-Side-by-Side.pdf>
- FAQ about the Executive Order from the Governor: <https://files.nc.gov/governor/documents/files/FAQs-for-Phase-1-EO-FINAL.pdf>
- Executive Order 138: <https://files.nc.gov/governor/documents/files/EO138-Phase-1.pdf>
- Frequently Asked Questions on Cloth Face Coverings: <https://files.nc.gov/ncdhhs/documents/files/covid-19/FAQs-Cloth-Face-Coverings.pdf>
- Shopping tips: <https://assets.hillsboroughnc.gov/media/documents/temporary/shopping-tips-NrlootKuEBJdJRB1.pdf>
- Takeout tips: <https://assets.hillsboroughnc.gov/media/documents/temporary/takeout-tips-ZPMvPNfkKuZHxdoz.pdf>

Additional Tips to Flatten the Curve

To lower the risk of spreading respiratory infections, including COVID-19, the Orange County Health Department also encourages everyone to:

- Stay home when you are sick.
- Avoid contact with sick people.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Call your doctor if you are experiencing symptoms.
- Cloth face coverings are recommended when you leave the house and may be near other people who are not family or household members.

Reliable Information

For the latest information and guidance relating to Orange County's COVID-19 response:

- Visit www.orangecountync.gov/coronavirus.
- Receive daily text updates on the crisis by texting 888-777 with OCNCHEALTH for English speakers and OCNCALUD for Spanish speakers.
- Sign up for a twice weekly e-newsletter about the COVID-19 response via the [county website](#).
- Follow the Orange County Health Department on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).
- The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services updates its [COVID-19 case count dashboard](#) daily at 11 a.m.

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