

**POLK COUNTY, TEXAS
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Date: March 18, 2020

Time: 11 a.m.

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Polk County Responds to COVID-19

(Instructions for Public, Changes in Operation, and Jury Duty Updates)

On March 16th, Polk County Judge Sydney Murphy declared a Local State of Disaster for a Public Health Emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as extraordinary measures must be taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Schools in Polk County determined it was advisable to close for the week. Some stores have changed their hours of operation, and some businesses and local agencies are changing the way they conduct business to limit person to person contact.

At this time, there are 64 cases of COVID-19 in Texas and one death. According to the Angelina County & Cities Health District, there are no reported cases of COVID-19 in Polk County. A list of helpful websites and links to view current COVID-19 case counts in Texas and Polk County can be found at the end of this update.

Instructions for the Public

Persons with chronic respiratory issues, those with compromised immunity, underlying medical conditions, and those 65 years of age or older are encouraged not to visit public places where people gather.

The current recommendation is to avoid unnecessary gatherings, and also to avoid discretionary travel, shopping trips, and social visits. Local places of assembly (restaurants, churches, places where people gather) are encouraged to follow current CDC guidance, which recommends not to have gatherings of more than 10 people with a social distance of 3-6 feet between each person.

This guidance, although inconvenient, is an important step to protect the public and prevent the spread of COVID-19. Should a case occur in Polk County, protective actions and recommendations may change.

Please do not panic. Please be mindful that when you panic you may cause others to panic as well. It's good to stock up on some necessary household items, but hoarding or over shopping is not necessary.

Facebook is a great tool for sharing information. Unfortunately, Facebook is also a great place for spreading false rumors. It is important to get your information from reliable sources.

Preventative measures Polk County has taken in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

The County will remain open and operational at this time. We follow the guidance of our Public Health Authorities and will make decisions based on their recommendations. Polk County has put the following preventive measures in place to protect the health of Polk County residents:

1. Communicated CDC Guidance for COVID-19 to the general public, travelers, local healthcare professionals, nursing homes, long-term care facilities, adult day cares, first responders, schools, and businesses.
2. Requested that the public to practice good hygiene and common sense to protect their own health such as: covering coughs, washing hands, cleaning frequently touched objects and surfaces, maintaining a social distance of 3-6 feet, avoiding people who are sick, and staying home when you are sick.
3. Requested that the public call ahead to their healthcare providers before seeking medical attention if they suspect that they have been exposed to COVID-19.
4. Informed the public that the medical community is working with public health to make sure that anyone that meets the Texas Department of State Health Services COVID-19 testing criteria will be evaluated for testing.

Closures or Changes in Operation

1. The Polk County Justice of the Peace, Precinct #4 has canceled jury trials scheduled for Thursday, March 26th. Do not report for jury duty.
2. The Polk County Districts Courts canceled jury duty trials scheduled for Monday, March 30th. Do not report for jury duty.
3. Beginning Monday, Polk County Senior Centers in Livingston, Onalaska, and Corrigan will be closed until further notice. The Polk County Department of Aging will have meals ready for pickup at each center for seniors currently enrolled in the seniors program to take home. Meals-on-Wheels deliveries will continue as normal.
4. The Veterans Services Office is open by appointment only until further notice. For appointments, please call their office at (936) 327-6838.

5. County-owned rental facilities to include Dunbar Gym and the Polk County Commerce Center are closed until further notice.

Businesses, please review your Continuity of Operations Plans and follow the guidance for Businesses and Employers on the CDC website at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html>.

Sources for COVID-19 Information

For COVID-19 case counts in Texas: <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/news/updates.shtm#coronavirus>

For COVID-19 case counts in Polk County: <https://www.acchd.us/health-concerns/covid-19/>

Texas DSHS information on COVID-19: www.dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus

CDC Information on COVID-19: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

CDC's COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions page: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html>.

Please look for further updates on the Polk County Emergency Management Facebook page (www.facebook.com/PolkCountyEmergencyManagement) or on our website at www.PolkCountyOEM.com.

Updates can also be found on the Polk County, Texas website at www.co.polk.tx.us or on the Polk County, Texas Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/PolkCountyTexas/>.