



Hidalgo County Commissioners Court

Richard F. Cortez
County Judge

David L. Fuentes
Commissioner, Precinct 1

Eduardo "Eddie" Cantu
Commissioner, Precinct 2

Joe M. Flores
Commissioner, Precinct 3

Ellie Torres
Commissioner, Precinct 4

**OFFICE OF
COUNTY JUDGE
RICHARD F. CORTEZ**

Public Affairs Division

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NEWS ADVISORY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, April 7, 2020

Hidalgo County Judge Richard F. Cortez Enacts Stricter Measures to Mitigate COVID-19 Spread

EDINBURG – As the spread of the COVID-19 strain of coronavirus continues, Hidalgo County Judge Richard F. Cortez signed new, stricter orders for all residents and visitors in Hidalgo County. The new orders include a curfew as well as a requirement for everyone to use facial coverings while outdoors.

“I have been relying on health experts at the local, state and national level and all of them suggest this disease will continue to spread exponentially over the next few weeks,” Judge Cortez said. “My objective in issuing these new orders is to slow that spread in Hidalgo County so we save lives, we don’t overwhelm our healthcare providers and we protect our frontline personnel.”

The new orders go into effect at midnight tonight and remain in effect until midnight on April 30.

Among the new mandates in the 15-page document:

1. In addition to the existing Shelter-At-Home mandate, a new 24-hour curfew for persons under age 17 has been ordered, unless the minor is accompanied by a parent or engaged in an essential service or emergency.
2. The existing Shelter-At-Home mandate will also become a curfew for everyone ages 18 and older between 11 p.m. and 5 a.m. Only people engaged in essential services or emergencies may be out on the streets between these hours.
3. Community childcare services may only be provided to children of essential workers. Childcare may only be provided in groups of ten or less in separate rooms.

- MORE -

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Page 2/3

4. All essential businesses in unincorporated areas of Hidalgo County must adopt Work Safe Measures including six-foot physical distancing for employees and the public; and washing hands regularly for at least 20 seconds. Work Safe Plans that have developed for incorporated cities may be used for the county.

5. If someone tests positive for COVID-19, the entire household is ordered to isolate at home. If a healthcare provider orders a patient to isolate at home pending the results of a COVID-19 test then all family members must isolate at home as well.

6. To the extent possible, vehicle travel should be limited to two occupants for essential business and to four occupants per vehicle for healthcare functions, government functions, retail services and critical infrastructure.

7. Facial coverings will be required for all persons three years old and older while outdoors, including but not limited to entering any building open to the public; when on business parking lots; when using public transportation; and when pumping gas. Restaurant workers must wear a facial covering when providing take-out, drive-through or delivery of food. The facial coverings include homemade masks, scarves, bandanas, and handkerchiefs. Medical grade masks are not required and are discouraged so as not to interrupt the supply of these masks to healthcare professionals.

8. Exceptions to the face covering mandate include people exercising and keeping six feet of physical distance; people driving in personal vehicles while engaged in essential activities; people at home or alone in an office are not required to wear facial coverings.

Judge Cortez added these measures to existing measures that include Shelter-at-Home for all nonessential business employees; price gouging protections; and six-foot physical distancing between people.

- MORE -

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Page 3/3

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"The basis for the orders is simple," Judge Cortez said. "We must all assume we are carrying the virus. Every action we take must be done with the consideration that we will not spread it to those around us. By taking these actions now, we are improving our chances of returning to some sense of normalcy sooner than later."

For more information please contact Hidalgo County Public Affairs Director Carlos Sanchez at 956-292-7026.

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