

Read a transcript of the March 30 Facebook Live Update below:

Board of Commissioners Chair Julia Olson Boseman:

We know that this virus is here in our community through community transmission.

We also know that the best way to prevent the spread is to social distance and stay at home.

So that is why county leaders, along with the mayors of each of our municipalities have collaborated to implement additional county-wide restrictions in addition to the Governor's state-wide Stay at Home Order.

When we began discussing additional restrictions last week, we understood that there would be questions and these measures would be difficult.

The City of Wilmington was interested in putting in additional measures, and our Public Health Department provided them with a list of any all measures that could be taken to help stop the spread. It was that guidance and those discussions that led me to speak with our other mayors – and we all agreed that we needed a comprehensive approach.

It was important that the restrictions put in place within the city were mirrored everywhere in our county. So our current order was based on data and information from Public Health and specific knowledge about our community that is different from other areas – like our density and the fact that we live on the coast.

So our county-wide order was agreed upon by all of us so that we can have one approach, one voice, and be aligned in our focus of keeping our community and all of our residents safe. This order for the next 14 days is included in and allowed by our state of emergency.

Again, these measures are based on the advice and council from our public health experts. Because if we don't take these important steps now, it is likely that this virus will have a devastating effect in the weeks and months to come.

I am especially appreciative of our medical community for your support of these efforts, and for all you are doing to prepare and respond to this health crisis.

Now, I want to provide a brief outline of the state and county orders for all of you to hear and answer some questions that we have heard over the past few days. I encourage you to visit our website that has a really comprehensive list of FAQs and other information. That website is **Health.NHCgov.com**.

Both the Governor's and County's Order go into effect today at 5 pm. The Governor's order lasts for 30 days and the county's order lasts for 14 days.

We do plan to evaluate our local order, determine its effectiveness, and make decisions each week on how best to move forward.

For the next 30 days, the Governor's Stay at Home Order requires that people stay at their residence and limit social interactions. If you leave your home, it must be for essential business purposes and essential activities like to take care of others, obtain food, and seek medical care.

There is a long list of what is an essential business, and I'm not going to run through that full list – but you can find it on our website on the Frequently Asked Questions at [Health.NHCgov.com](https://www.health.nh.gov).

The order also requires that people limit gatherings to no more than 10 people, which is something the county has had in place since I signed our State of Emergency declaration on March 20.

The order does not prevent citizens from being outside their homes to get fresh air. So I encourage you to take a walk, while keeping six feet from others. Play in your back yard. Enjoy these pretty days – but enjoy them at your own residence.

The county's restrictions take retail closures a step further than the Governor's Order to help protect our community.

These closures are in line with the Governor's order and they are in line with many other largely populated counties in the state.

The county's restrictions specifically close:

- Carry-out food service – but delivery, drive-thru, and curbside food service is still permitted.
- It closes playgrounds, public gardens, team sport facilities, social clubs, and country clubs.

- It closes non-essential retail, but still allows for curbside retail service – so we encourage our businesses to adapt, be innovative and think about how you can stay open with online shopping and curb-side pick-up.
- It's important to emphasize this point: all in-person shopping, except for those essential stores, needs to end.
- Our order also closes auto and boat dealerships, but not auto repair or maintenance services.
- It also closes hotels, motels, and short-term lodging that is less than 28 days.

An important clarification to make is that if your business is listed as non-essential, but you are providing direct assistance to a governmental, community partner, business partner or non-profit request for support in COVID-19 emergency response, you may remain open and operational.

For example, if you are an auto dealership that is closed under the county's order, you are asked to remain at a minimal level of service so that a healthcare provider or local agency or business can purchase a van for transport if it is needed during this critical time. But you can't have your showroom open to customers. These restrictions on auto dealers and retail are similar to those in Mecklenburg, Buncombe, Guilford and Durham counties – we are all trying to limit the number of times residents come into close contact with others, or potentially contaminated surfaces.

Similarly, hotels and motels that are providing lodging for workers who are deemed essential and critical to our area right now or providing lodging to residents who are displaced from their homes in New Hanover County can continue operations as needed to support our community.

The reason to close hotels is because we are trying to prevent vacationers and leisure travelers from coming into our community unnecessarily, and potentially bringing the virus with them.

But we want to ensure local residents who are otherwise displaced from their homes and workers who are in our community providing an important service continue to have a place to stay.

The county and our nonprofits are also working with hotel partners to place our homeless or others who are vulnerable and living in congregate settings, who are exhibiting symptoms and need to be quarantined, and that will continue to be essential.

We know this isn't easy, but these orders are meant to protect our front line healthcare workers and our most vulnerable.

But none of this will help if we don't take it seriously and obey these rules.

Both the state and county's orders are enforceable by law, but the legal penalties are not what should convince people to follow these orders.

The seriousness of this virus and the fact that it is being transferred so easily from one person to another should make you want to comply.

We hope and believe that you will listen.

It is up to each of us to follow.

We are a resilient community and we will get through this – but we have to do it together, with our collective strength, kindness, and support.

Now Lisa Brown will make a few comments from Public Health...

Public Health Preparedness Coordinator:

Thank you, madam chair.

I couldn't agree more. Our message is simple: Please stay home.

Don't travel unless it is absolutely necessary.

If you are experiencing mild symptoms and are not in a high-risk group, please stay home. Even the most mild of symptoms that you have could impact someone else in a much different way.

You have all heard it by now, but the best way to combat the spread of this virus is physical spacing – which is what we all know as social distancing.

There is currently no medicine in place, no vaccine, for COVID-19. That means our actions must change to protect ourselves and protect others.

More aggressive measures now can bend our local case count curve downward earlier and to a greater extent, allow for a more manageable level over the long run.

I also want to share the state's Department of Health and Human Services is also changing the way they confront this virus.

Just this week, they have shared additional guidance with public health and clinicians that COVID-19 tests submitted to the NC Public Health Lab should be performed only on those with symptoms compatible with COVID 19 and who are hospitalized patients, healthcare workers or first responders, patients who live in or have regular contact with a high-risk setting, and anyone at higher risk of severe illness and whose results would inform clinical management.

So that means the way we, as Public Health, respond to in our testing and monitoring of this virus is changing too.

If you have symptoms consistent with COVID-19 and your symptoms are mild, the best thing you can do right now is stay home, isolate yourself from other people in your household as much as possible, and recover.

If you have more serious symptoms or are at risk of serious illness and begin experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, call your healthcare provider or the Coronavirus Call Center at 910-798-6800 immediately.

More serious symptoms can include shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, chest pain or pressure, confusion or blue lips.

In the case of a medical emergency, please call 911.

Public Health is actively working on behalf of our community. We are following and responding to the guidance from the state. And we are taking steps every day to help keep you and your families safe.

We are all anxious during this uncertain time, but the only way we can stop this is to stay home.

We hope that you will all heed this advice. Protect yourself and protect our community.

Our team has done a great job of providing really consistent, up-to-date information on our website, so please go to Health.NHCgov.com to learn more and to stay informed.

How is enforcement going to work?

New Hanover County Sheriff's Office, along with the Police departments of the City of Wilmington, Carolina Beach, Kure Beach, and Wrightsville Beach, have the tough task of enforcing the Governor's order and the additional county restrictions. We know that this will be difficult and a strain on these public safety officers, so we are asking our residents to abide by these rules outlined. Keep the safety of these officers and the public at the forefront.

What about people out on boats, on islands, and in the waterways?

We know that with the beaches closed that many of you are looking for ways to enjoy the beautiful weather and to get outside. We've all seen the pictures.

While the Stay at Home order and county restrictions do not close waterways, we encourage our residents to be reasonable and responsible. Practicing the ordered social distancing guidelines – no matter where you are – is still critical for your health and the health of everyone around you. But really, just stay at home.

Why did all of the municipalities and the county decide to issue more restrictions than the Governor?

We are a highly dense community with 235,00 people who live within 199 square land miles. We also have open bodies of water, one hospital that supports a 7-county region, and community needs that are different from other areas. It is so important that we work now to limit the impact on our hospital system, so that they don't become overburdened, and so we can keep our community as safe as possible. These additional restrictions are important and necessary.

Do I need a special permit to drive to work?

No, you don't need a special permit to drive to work. Some local companies have given their employees documentation, but it is not required.