



For Immediate Release

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Regional Shelter-in-Place Orders Extended as Some Rules Ease

Health Officers caution that reducing restrictions too quickly could lead to a substantial resurgence of COVID-19

The seven Bay Area Public Health Officers who ordered a shelter in place in mid-March will extend the orders through May 31 while some restrictions are eased and tools to strengthen containment of COVID-19 are put into place. The social distancing intervention has slowed the increase of new cases and prevented the anticipated medical surge. As restrictions are eased, it is critical to ensure that growth of cases can be sufficiently contained to protect the health and safety of our community.

All construction activities, certain businesses that operate primarily outdoors, and some outdoor activities will be allowed to resume with specific conditions.

These new Health Officer orders, which take effect May 4, cover everyone living or working in the counties of Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, San Francisco, San Mateo, and Santa Clara as well as the City of Berkeley, an independent public health jurisdiction. As of April 28, 2020, there are 7,273 confirmed cases (up from 258 confirmed cases on March 15, 2020) and 266 deaths (up from 4 deaths on March 15, 2020) in the seven Bay Area jurisdictions jointly issuing this Order.

This next phase reflects regional progress, thanks to the collective action Bay Area residents have taken since mid-March in response to Health Officer shelter-in-place orders. Those actions have saved lives and staved off mass hospitalizations from the COVID-19 virus, which spreads easily and causes severe illness in many people. There is not yet an effective treatment or cure for the disease.

This initial, measured easing of some restrictions is designed to set the stage for a gradual resumption of activity and prevent rapid, exponential growth of cases that could overwhelm hospitals for a particular jurisdiction or the region as a whole.

"We are thankful our residents and businesses have complied with the shelter in place order and helped us to flatten the curve," said Dr. Erica Pan, Health Officer for Alameda County. "Social distancing hasn't been easy, but it has slowed the increase of new cases, prevented our health systems from becoming overwhelmed, and saved lives. I am encouraged by the data trends and happy to share the indicators we can follow together as we begin to phase in low-risk activities. However, this virus is still in our communities. Everyone needs to continue to shelter-in-place and wear a face covering when out."

"The new order allows us to carefully monitor our progress while building the essential public health infrastructure – such as contact tracing and testing capacity – that will support our gradual reopening and make recovery possible," said Dr. Tomás Aragon, Health Officer for the City and County of San Francisco.

Under the new orders, all construction projects will be allowed to resume as long as the project complies with safety protocols included with the order. All real estate transactions will also now be able to resume, but with continued restrictions on open houses and limitations on in-person viewings. Any employee allowed to return to work at a facility can also access childcare programs that can operate.

Certain outdoor businesses can also begin operating again, and people can visit those businesses to perform work or obtain goods, services, or supplies. This includes wholesale and retail nurseries, landscapers, gardeners, and other businesses that primarily provide outdoor services as set forth in the order. Outdoor businesses do not include restaurants, cafes or bars, regardless of whether they have outdoor seating.

Other activities that can resume under the new order include residential moves and the use of certain shared outdoor recreational facilities that were previously ordered closed, like skate parks, but not others that involve shared equipment or physical contact.

These orders are generally consistent with the state's shelter in place order. On any issue where the local and state orders may differ, the stricter order applies.

Indicators to help assess progress on containing COVID-19

Health Officers are also releasing indicators that will be used to measure progress in containing the virus and ensuring we have the infrastructure in place to protect the community from COVID-19. These indicators will be critical to decisions in the coming weeks and months about when and how to ease shelter-in-place restrictions.

The indicators include:

- Whether the total number of cases in the community is flat or decreasing;
- Whether the number of hospitalized patients with COVID-19 is flat or decreasing;
- Whether there is an adequate supply of personal protective equipment for all health care workers;
- Whether we are meeting the need for testing, especially for persons in vulnerable populations or those in high-risk settings or occupations; and
- Whether we have the capacity to investigate all COVID-19 cases and trace all of their contacts, isolating those who test positive and quarantining the people who may have been exposed.

“A pandemic of this scale is unprecedented,” said Dr. Sara Cody, Santa Clara County Health Officer. “We are progressing steadily as a region, but we must reduce restrictions on activity gradually or we will put the lives of many community members at risk.”

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