



**STAY HOME – STAY SAFE  
ORDER**

**April 1, 2020**

**BY**

**BEN ZELLER, JUDGE OF THE COUNTY OF VICTORIA**

***Summary:** Because of the risk of the rapid spread of the virus causing COVID-19 and the resulting need to protect the most vulnerable members of the community have not subsided, this order imposes mandatory, enforceable social distancing requirements. This Order takes effect at 12:01 a.m. on April 2, 2020 and will continue through April 30, 2020.*

**Whereas**, I, Ben Zeller, Judge of the County of Victoria, declared a State of Local Disaster due to a Public Health Emergency on March 16, 2020; and

**Whereas**, the Commissioner’s Court of the County of Victoria extended the duration of the state of local disaster until lifted by the Judge or Commissioner’s Court; and

**Whereas** Greg Abbott, Governor of the State of Texas, issued Executive Order GA-14 on March 31, 2020, (“EO-GA-14”), which ordered that every Texan shall, except where necessary to provide or obtain essential services, minimize social gatherings and minimize in-person contact with people who are not in the same household; and

**Whereas**, section 418.108(g) of the Texas Government Code authorizes the Judge of a county, during a declared local disaster, to control the movement of persons and the occupancy of premises in that area, which includes the ability to reduce the possibility of exposure to disease, control the risk, promote health, compel persons to undergo additional health measures that prevent or control the spread of disease; and

**Whereas** Section 418.173 of the Texas Government Code provides that a state, local, or interjurisdictional emergency management plan may provide that failure to comply with the plan or with a rule, order, or ordinance adopted under the plan is an offense punishable by a fine not to exceed \$1,000 or confinement in jail for a term not to exceed 180 days, or both; and

**Whereas** the Victoria County/City of Victoria Emergency Management Plan provides that failure to comply with the terms of the plan, or with a rule, order,

or ordinance adopted under the plan is an offense punishable by a fine of not more than \$1,000 or confinement in jail for a term not to exceed 180 days; and

**Whereas** this order seeks to provide the greatest degree of protection available to the residents of Victoria County, consistent with the limitations imposed by EO-GA-14;

**Now therefore, I, Ben Zeller, Judge of the County of Victoria, Texas, hereby find and order:**

1. That this Order supersedes the Order to Control Social Gatherings Due to a Public Health Emergency that I issued on March 21, 2020.

2. That this Order is consistent with EO-GA-14, in that it does not restrict essential services allowed by EO-GA-14 or allow gatherings prohibited by EO-GA-14.

3. That, consistent with the Governor's Order that each Texan shall minimize in-person contact with people who are not in the same household, each person within the County of Victoria is **ORDERED** to stay at home, except where necessary to provide or obtain "Essential services," as that term is defined in EO-GA-14.

4. That day care services for children and adults are added to the definition of Essential services for the jurisdiction covered by this order, to the extent necessary to allow caregivers to provide or obtain Essential services.

5. That, notwithstanding the foregoing, each person in the County seeking to provide or obtain essential services is hereby **ORDERED** to comply with mandatory social distancing requirements, by maintaining a space of 6-feet between all people, regardless of location. For the purpose of clarity, unless otherwise excepted below, this order applies to all locations outside of a household or living unit, regardless of the number of people in attendance, and is not intended to create a distinction between types of gatherings, whether indoor or outdoor, whether social, community, recreational, commercial, retail, or otherwise.

6. That, except where necessary to provide or obtain essential services, all public or private gatherings occurring inside a single household or living unit, if the gathering includes a person who is not a member of that household or living unit, are **PROHIBITED**. Nothing in this Order prohibits the gathering of members of a household or living unit.

7. That all businesses operating within the County of Victoria, and all persons responsible for any other type of group activity allowed to continue operation under this Order, are **ORDERED** to establish procedures to ensure compliance with this Order by, among other things enforcing social distancing requirements established herein and increasing cleaning of commonly and frequently touched surfaces. Procedures which establish physical barriers between people, such as a sneeze guard or similar shielding, would comply with the physical distancing requirements of this order.

8. That food establishments are **ORDERED** to close common dining areas to in-person dining, and strongly encouraged to provide take-out, drive through, curbside and delivery food services designed to limit exposure between individuals.

9. That the holder of a wine and beer retailer's permit or mixed beverage permit (collectively "bar") is **ORDERED** to close common bar spaces to the public and is **PROHIBITED** from allowing consumption within the bar.

10. That any person experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19 is **ORDERED** to isolate at home, except to the extent necessary to obtain health care services, until the later-occurring of (a) such time as that person is symptom-free for a period of 72 hours, or (b) seven (7) days after the onset of symptoms; and that every member of the household or living unit is **ORDERED** to isolate at home for the same time period. Any person ordered to isolate at home by this paragraph cannot go to work, or any other location unless expressly permitted by written order of the local health authority, or unless each member of the household or living unit has been cleared by the protocol established by the local health authority.

11. That any person who has received orders from a health care provider to be tested for COVID-19 is **ORDERED** to isolate at home, except to the extent necessary to take the COVID-19 test as instructed by the health care professional, and further that, if any person in a household or living unit has tested positive for COVID-19, every member of the household or living unit is **ORDERED** to isolate at home. Any person ordered to isolate at home by this paragraph cannot go to work, or any other location unless expressly permitted by written order of the local health authority, until such time as each member of the household or living unit has been cleared by the protocol established by the local health authority.

12. That peace officers, Victoria County health inspectors and the Office of the Victoria County Fire Marshal, are hereby authorized to enforce this order to the extent of their authority under state and local law.


13. That any person who violates this Order commits an offense punishable by a fine of not more than \$1,000 and confinement in jail for a term not to exceed 180 days.

14. That the Victoria County Public Health Department will post this Order on the website [www.VictoriaTxOEM.org](http://www.VictoriaTxOEM.org). In addition, the owner, manager, or operator of any facility that is likely to be impacted by this Order is strongly encouraged to post a copy of this Order onsite and to provide a copy to any member of the public asking for a copy.


15. That, if any subsection, sentence, clause, phrase or word of this Order or any application of it to any person, structure, gathering or circumstance is held to be invalid or unconstitutional by a decision of a court of competent jurisdiction, then such decision will not affect the validity of the remainder of this Order and its application.

16. That this **ORDER** shall take effect at 12:01 a.m. on April 2, 2020 and continue until April 30, 2020, unless lifted or further extended by separate order.

**ORDERED this the 1<sup>st</sup> day of April, 2020.**

  
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**Ben Zeller**, Judge of the County of Victoria

Attested and Approved as to Legal Form:

  
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**Constance Filley Johnson**, Criminal District Attorney