

DECLARATION OF LOCAL DISASTER DUE TO PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY

WHEREAS, in December 2019, a novel coronavirus, now designated COVID-19, was detected in Wuhan, China; and

WHEREAS, symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough, and shortness of breath, and can range from very mild (including some with no reported symptoms) to severe, including illness resulting in death; and

WHEREAS, the United States Center for Disease Control (CDC) reports that older people and people of all ages with severe underlying health conditions seem to be at a higher risk of developing serious COVID-19 illness; and

WHEREAS, on January 30, 2020, the World Health Organization declared the outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern; and

WHEREAS, as of March 7, 2020, the World Health Organization reported that the global number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 surpassed 100,000; and

WHEREAS, on March 7, 2020, the World Health Organization urged every country to take all necessary measures to slow further spread of COVID-19 and to protect health systems from becoming overwhelmed; and

WHEREAS, the CDC states that "it's likely that at some point, widespread transmission of COVID-19 in the United States will occur," which translates to a large number of people needing medical care at the same time; and

WHEREAS, on March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization characterized COVID-19 as a pandemic; and

WHEREAS, as of March 12, 2020, the CDC confirmed 1,215 US cases and 36 deaths related to COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, on March 13, 2020, the Governor of the State of Texas and the President of the United States of America declared a state of emergency in relation to COVID-19;

WHEREAS, as of March 13, 2020, there are no declared cases of COVID-19 in the County of El Paso; and

WHEREAS, the emergence and spread of COVID-19 within El Paso County poses an imminent threat of widespread illness resulting from an epidemic that requires emergency action; and

WHEREAS, the County Judge of El Paso County has determined that extraordinary measures must be taken to protect the health and welfare of County residents from the effects of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, Texas Government Code Chapter 418, Section 418.108 authorizes the presiding officer of the governing body of a political subdivision to declare a local state of disaster; and

WHEREAS, a declaration of local disaster and public health emergency includes the ability to take measures to reduce the possibility of exposure to disease, control the risk, prevent the spread of the disease and promote the health and safety of individuals in El Paso County; and

WHEREAS, the County of El Paso will work collaboratively with the entire region which includes El Paso County, Las Cruces, New Mexico, and Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, as well as the local health authority to ensure that all appropriate and necessary measures are taken to limit the development, contraction and spread of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, by this declaration, I declare all rules and regulations that may inhibit or prevent prompt response to this threat suspended for the duration of the incident.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED BY THE COUNTY JUDGE OF EL PASO:

1. That a local state of disaster is hereby declared for the County of El Paso pursuant to §418.108(a) of the Texas Government Code.
2. Pursuant to §418.108(b) of the Texas Government Code, the state of disaster shall continue for a period of not more than seven days from the date of this declaration unless continued or renewed by the El Paso County Commissioners Court.
3. Pursuant to §418.108(c) of the Texas Government Code, this declaration of a local state of disaster shall be given prompt and general publicity and shall be filed promptly with the County Clerk.
4. Pursuant to §418.108(d) of the Texas Government Code, this declaration of a local state of disaster activates the County emergency plan.
5. This declaration activates the recovery and rehabilitation aspects of all applicable local or interjurisdictional emergency management plans and authorizes the furnishing of all aid and assistance as deemed necessary or desirable by those administering such plan.
6. Pursuant to Texas Health and Safety Code §121.003(a), the governing body of a municipality or the commissioners court of a county may enforce any law that is reasonably necessary to protect the public health.
7. This declaration authorizes the County to suspend or modify any order, regulation, rule, procedure, process, policy, or County covenant in which the County is a party to.
8. This declaration authorizes the County Judge the ability to take measures to reduce the possibility of exposure to disease, control the risk, and promote the health and safety of El Paso County residents by limiting public gatherings, if deemed necessary.
9. This declaration shall take effect immediately from and after its issuance.

ORDERED this the 13th day of March, 2020.

COUNTY OF EL PASO, TEXAS

Ricardo A. Samaniego

Ricardo A. Samaniego
El Paso County Judge

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