

# Health Officer Order Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

## When does this Health Order become effective?

This Order shall become effective at **12:00 a.m. on March 18, 2020** and will continue to be in effect until **11:59 p.m. on April 7, 2020**, or until it is extended, rescinded, superseded, or amended in writing by the Health Officer.

## What does this Order do?

This Order requires that most people stay home starting as soon as possible, but no later than 12:00 a.m. on Wednesday, March 18, 2020, unless they are engaged in certain “Essential Activities” which are discussed more below. For most people, this means you and those you live with should remain at home. You are allowed to leave your home for specified reasons to make sure you have the necessities of life (discussed more below) such as getting food and medical supplies. You are also allowed to go outside to take care of pets, go on a walk, and just get outside, so long as you do not congregate in a group and maintain at least six feet of distance between you and other people. If you are sick you should self-isolate, including, to the extent you can, from others you live with.

## What does it mean to “shelter in place”?

The term “shelter in place” means to stay in your home and not leave unless necessary for one of the designated exceptions listed in the Order.

## What is the difference between “sheltering in place” and “social distancing”?

Sheltering in place is a more stringent form of social distancing.

Sheltering in place means: Stay home and only go out for “essential activities,” to work for an “essential business,” or for “essential travel” as those terms are defined in the Order.

Social distancing means: Stay 6 feet or more away from others and no gatherings.

## Am I allowed to leave my home while this Order is in effect?

The intent of this Order is to ensure that people remain in their residences and minimize social interactions outside of their immediate family unit. You may leave your residence for reasons specified in the Order.

## What activities are considered essential?

- To obtain necessary services or supplies for themselves and their family, household members, and pets, or to deliver those services or supplies to others, such as, by way of example only and without limitation, canned food, dry goods, fresh fruits and vegetables, pet food and supply, fresh meats, fish, and poultry, and any other household consumer products, and products necessary to maintain the safety, sanitation, and essential operation of residences.
- To engage in outdoor activity, provided the individuals comply with Social Distancing Requirements, such as walking, hiking, biking, or running.
- To perform work providing essential products and services at an Essential Business.
- To care for a family member or pet in another household.

## What kinds of businesses are considered essential, according to the Public Health Order?

The Public Health Order lists the following essential businesses:

1. Healthcare Operations and Essential Infrastructure;
2. Grocery stores, certified farmers' markets, farm and produce stands, supermarkets, food banks, convenience stores, and other establishments engaged in the retail sale of canned food, dry goods, fresh fruits and vegetables, pet food and supply, fresh meats, fish, and poultry, and any other household consumer products (such as cleaning and personal care products). This includes stores that sell groceries and also sell other non-grocery products, and products necessary to maintaining the safety, sanitation, and essential operation of residences. Farmer's markets shall comply with CDPH Guidance regarding Retail Food, Beverage, and Other Related Service Venues issued March 16, 2020;
3. Agriculture, food, and beverage cultivation, processing, and distribution, including but not limited to, farming, ranching, fishing, dairies, creameries, wineries and breweries in order to preserve inventory and production;
4. Businesses that are necessary to support agriculture, food, and beverage cultivation, processing, and distribution;
5. Businesses that provide food, shelter, and social services, and other necessities of life for economically disadvantaged or otherwise needy individuals;
6. Newspapers, television, radio, and other media services;
7. Gas stations and auto-supply, auto-repair, and related facilities;
8. Banks and related financial institutions;
9. Hardware stores;
10. Plumbers, electricians, exterminators, and other service providers who provide services that are necessary to maintaining the safety, sanitation, and essential operation of residences, Essential Activities, and Essential Businesses;
11. Businesses that support or provide Essential Infrastructure;
12. Businesses providing mailing and shipping services, including post office boxes;
13. Educational institutions—including public and private K-12 schools, colleges, and universities—for purposes of facilitating distance learning or performing essential functions, provided that social distancing of six-feet per person is maintained to the greatest extent possible;
14. Laundromats, dry cleaners, and laundry service providers;
15. Restaurants and other facilities that prepare and serve food, but only for drive-thru, delivery, or carry out. Schools and other entities that typically provide free food services to students or members of the public may continue to do so under this Order on the condition that the food is provided to students or members of the public on a pick-up and take-away basis only. Schools and other entities that provide food services under this exemption shall not permit the food to be eaten at the site where it is provided, or at any other gathering site. Food trucks shall comply with CDPH Guidance regarding Retail Food, Beverage, and Other Related Service Venues issued March 16, 2020;
16. Businesses that supply products needed for people to work from home;
17. Businesses that supply other essential businesses with the support or supplies necessary to operate;
18. Businesses that ship or deliver groceries, food, goods or services directly to residences;
19. Airlines, taxis, and other private transportation providers providing transportation services necessary for Essential Activities and other purposes expressly authorized in this Order;
20. Home-based care for seniors, adults, or children;
21. Residential facilities and shelters for seniors, adults, and children;
22. Professional services, such as legal or accounting services, when necessary to assist in compliance with legally mandated activities;

23. Childcare facilities providing services that enable employees exempted in this Order to work as permitted. To the extent possible, childcare facilities must operate under the following mandatory conditions:
- a. Childcare must be carried out in stable groups of 12 or fewer (“stable” means that the same 12 or fewer children are in the same group each day).
  - b. Children shall not change from one group to another.
  - c. If more than one group of children is cared for at one facility, each group shall be in a separate room. Groups shall not mix with each other.
  - d. Childcare providers shall remain solely with one group of children.

### **What does it mean to provide “Essential Infrastructure?”**

Individuals may leave their homes to perform work necessary to the operation and maintenance of essential infrastructure including but not limited to public works construction, construction of housing (in particular affordable housing or housing for homeless individuals), airport operations, water, sewer, gas, electrical, oil refining, roads and highways, public transportation, solid waste collection, internet service, and telecommunication systems provided they can carry out those services in compliance with social distancing requirements.

### **What about first responders?**

All first responders, emergency management personnel, emergency dispatchers, court personnel, and law enforcement are exempt from this Order.

### **Is this Health Order mandatory or is it just guidance?**

This Order is mandatory. All persons and other entities are required to comply if they do not fall within the exemptions that are specified in the Order.

### **Why is this Order in place?**

This Order is in place to address the ongoing spread of the virus that causes COVID-19 within the County and throughout the Bay Area. Due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus in the general public, which is now a pandemic according to the World Health Organization, there is a public health emergency throughout the County. It is essential to slow virus transmission as much as possible to protect the most vulnerable and to prevent the health care system from being overwhelmed. One proven way to slow the transmission is to limit interactions among people to the greatest extent practicable. By reducing the spread of the COVID-19 virus, this Order helps preserve critical and limited healthcare capacity in the County.

### **What happens if I don’t comply with this Order?**

This Order is a legal Order issued under the authority of California law. You are required to comply, and it is a misdemeanor not to follow the Order punishable by fine, imprisonment or both (although the intent is not for anyone to get in trouble). It is critical for everyone to follow the Order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and protect themselves, their loved ones, friends, neighbors and the whole community.

### **Can I leave home to visit friends or family members if there is no urgent need?**

No. For your safety as well as their safety, we need to help each other fight the spread of COVID-19 by staying at home.

## **How will I get food and medicines I need if I must “shelter in place” in my home?**

The Order specifically allows people to leave their home to buy food, purchase medicine, and purchase necessary items. It also encourages businesses selling those items to remain open, and allows employees of those businesses to keep working.

## **Can I still seek non-essential medical care like eye exams, teeth cleaning, elective procedures, etc.?**

Generally you should postpone these if possible. Check with your provider of routine care for specific guidance. They may cancel services. You should not expose yourself or others by pursuing health care or maintenance care that can wait a few weeks.

## **What medical and health-related activities are considered essential?**

Individuals may obtain services at any hospital, clinic, dentist, pharmacy, pharmaceutical or biotechnology company, other healthcare facility, healthcare supplier, home healthcare service, mental health provider, and any related healthcare service. This DOES NOT include fitness or exercise gyms or similar facilities.

## **What do I do if I need to obtain medical cannabis?**

Licensed cannabis businesses will remain open, but shall operate only for the purpose of providing medical cannabis and only via curbside pickup or delivery.

## **What if my pet needs access to care?**

You are able to seek veterinary care for your pets.

## **Should I stock up on food, necessities like toilet paper, and on medicines?**

No, you will continue to be able to purchase these items whenever you need them. Grocery stores, pharmacies and hardware stores will remain open. To ensure there is enough for everyone, please continue to buy normal quantities of these items on the same schedule you normally do.

## **Can I still get mail and deliveries?**

Yes. You will still be able to get mail and other deliveries at your home.

## **Can I still order the things I need online and have them delivered to my residence?**

Yes. The Order identifies businesses that deliver goods or services directly to residences as “essential businesses” that may continue to operate.

## **Can I take public transit?**

Yes, but public transit can only be used to perform “essential activities,” to get to and from work to operate “essential businesses,” or to maintain “essential governmental functions,” as those terms are defined in the Order. People riding on public transport must practice social distancing. This means maintaining at least six (6) feet distance from one another, which is appropriately two to three steps away.

**Can I get my prescriptions or other health care needs? Can I leave home to go to the pharmacy to get my prescription filled?**

Yes. Drug stores and other medical supply stores are allowed to operate. When possible you should have the drug store deliver your prescription medicine to your home.

**Can I visit loved ones in the hospital, nursing home, skilled nursing facility, or other residential care facility?**

Generally, no. There are limited exceptions specified in the Order. For most other situations, other existing Orders of the Health Officer addressing this emergency prohibit non-necessary visitation to these kinds of facilities. Please contact the facility you want to visit by phone before you visit to inquire about the status of visits. This is difficult, but it is necessary in order to protect hospital staff and other patients.