

Governor Cooper Declares State Of Emergency To Respond To Coronavirus COVID-19

Raleigh
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Governor Roy Cooper took the next step in the state's coronavirus COVID-19 preparedness plan today and issued an executive order declaring a state of emergency. The declaration activates the Emergency Operations Center to help agencies coordinate from one location and makes it easier to purchase needed medical supplies, protect consumers from price gouging, and increase county health departments' access to state funds.

In addition to Governor Cooper's emergency declaration, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NC DHHS) is making several recommendations to slow the spread of COVID-19 and reduce the number of people infected.

"The health and safety of North Carolinians is our top priority. We are taking the necessary steps to ensure that North Carolina is prepared and responding to this virus, and this order helps us do that," said Governor Cooper. "Though we are still in the early stages in North Carolina, time is a valuable resource and we must work together to slow the spread while we can."

Key provisions in the order are similar to those enacted in a natural disaster. The order will help with the cost burdens and supplies that may be difficult for providers and public health to access due to increased demand. It also increases the state public health department's role in supporting local health departments, which have been tasked with monitoring quarantines, tracing exposure and administering testing.

Today's updated NC DHHS recommendations are based on guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), current actions by other states, and the most up-to-date epidemiologic information available to protect the public's health. Many of the recommendations are targeted at protecting people at high risk of severe illness, which includes adults over 65 years, those with underlying health conditions including include heart disease, lung disease, or diabetes, or with weakened immune systems.

Additional recommendations are being made for residents of the Triangle region. On March 9, 2020, NC DHHS confirmed 5 new cases of COVID-19 in Wake County, increasing the total in the county to 6 and statewide to 7.

"We all play a role in keeping our communities safe and healthy. These precautions can help us slow the spread of this virus and protect our more vulnerable neighbors," said DHHS Secretary Mandy Cohen, M.D. "Let's be guided by compassion and reason and work to support each other as a community."

The following recommendations pertain to persons and establishments STATEWIDE.

HIGH-RISK PERSONS

NC DHHS recommends that people at high risk of severe illness from COVID-19 avoid large groups of people as much as possible. This includes gatherings such as concert venues, conventions, church services, sporting events, and crowded social events. People at high risk should also avoid cruise travel and non-essential air travel.

CONGREGATE LIVING FACILITIES

NC DHHS recommends that all facilities that serve as residential establishments for high risk persons described above should limit visitors and restrict all visitors who have respiratory illness or potential exposure to COVID-19. These establishments include: nursing homes, independent and assisted living facilities, correctional facilities, and facilities that care for medically vulnerable children.

MASS GATHERING EVENTS

NC DHHS recommends that event organizers:

- Urge anyone who is sick to not attend.
- Encourage those who are at high risk, described above, to not attend.
- Adopt lenient refund policies for people who are high risk.
- Find ways to give people more physical space to limit close contact as much as possible.
- Encourage attendees to wash hands frequently.
- Clean surfaces with standard cleaners.

ALL TRAVELERS

NC DHHS recommends that all travelers returning from countries and US states impacted by COVID-19 follow DHHS guidance on self-monitoring: <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/public-health/coronavirus-disease-2019-...>

The following recommendations pertain to persons and establishments in the TRIANGLE area.

WORKPLACE SETTINGS

NC DHHS recommends that employers and employees use teleworking technologies to the greatest extent possible. Additionally, employers should:

- Urge employees to stay home when they are sick and maximize flexibility in sick leave benefits.
- Consider staggering start and end times to reduce large numbers of people coming together at the same time.

MASS GATHERINGS, COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL EVENTS

NC DHHS recommends that organizers of mass gathering events that primarily draw high-risk persons, including those that attract older adults, should consider cancelling or postponing these events.

Currently, NC DHHS is not recommending pre-emptive school closures.

The recommendations should begin immediately and extend through March 31, 2020. NC DHHS will monitor the situation closely to determine whether to extend the recommendations beyond March 31st.

These measures were announced at a press conference today with Governor Cooper and members of the state's Coronavirus Task Force. The full executive order is available [here](#).

It is important to make sure the information you are getting about COVID-19 is coming directly from reliable sources like the CDC and NCDHHS.

For more information, please visit the CDC's website at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus and NCDHHS' website at www.ncdhhs.gov/coronavirus, which will also include future positive COVID-19 test results in North Carolina.