



GOVERNOR GREG ABBOTT

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Governor Abbott Issues Executive Order Establishing Strike Force To Open Texas

Directs Select Services To Reopen, Closes Schools For Remainder Of Academic Year

AUSTIN - Governor Greg Abbott today held a press conference where he issued three new Executive Orders to begin the process of reopening the state of Texas while revising hospital capacity and certain social distancing guidelines. Within the orders, select activities and services that pose minimal to no threat of spreading COVID-19 are allowed to reopen using a "Retail-To-Go" model, certain restrictions on surgeries have been loosened, and schools will remain closed for the remainder of the 2019-2020 academic year.

Within these orders, the Governor has established [the Strike Force to Open Texas](#) a team of nationally recognized medical experts and private and public leaders who will advise the Governor on safely and strategically reopening the state of Texas.

"Texans are battling a colossal challenge an invisible enemy that has tested our lives and our livelihoods but overcoming challenges is part of who we are as Texans," said Governor Abbott. "We have shown that Texas can continue our efforts to contain COVID-19 while also adopting safe standards that will allow us to begin the process of reopening Texas. The Strike Force to Open Texas brings together nationally recognized medical experts with public and private sector leaders to achieve this mission. By coming together, we can get Texans back to work, practice safe standards that will prevent the spread of COVID-19, and we can overcome this pandemic."

These health experts will develop a medical architecture to comprehensively test and trace COVID-19 that will enable Texans to gradually and safely begin the process of returning to work and other activities.

The medical team will work alongside a Special Advisory Council who will share innovative ideas to help businesses strategically reopen while containing the spread of COVID-19. The council consists of 39 business leaders representing the state's regions and industries. The advisory council will collaborate with working groups to devise strategies, statewide standards, and appropriate time frames to reopen the Lone Star State while prioritizing the health and safety of all Texans.

The strike force will immediately begin providing input on potential additional openings of activities and services in Texas consistent with guidelines provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The Governor will announce a revised plan for the state based on these initial recommendations on April 27.

[The Governors second Executive Order \(GA-16\)](#) relates to the safe, strategic reopening of select services and activities in Texas. This order establishes a temporary "Retail-To-Go" model that will allow retail outlets in Texas to reopen beginning Friday, April 24. Under this model, reopened establishments are required to deliver items to customer's cars, homes, or other locations to minimize contact.

Under this Executive Order, schools including public, private, and higher education institutions will remain closed for the 2019-2020 school year. Teachers may go into the classroom for video instruction, to perform administrative duties, and to clean out their classrooms.

[The Governors third Executive Order \(GA-15\)](#) relates to hospital capacity and personal protective equipment (PPE) needed for the COVID-19 response. The order loosens restrictions on surgeries [put in place by Governor Abbott in March](#). Beginning at 11:59pm on April 21 through 11:59pm on May 8, all licensed health care professionals and all licensed health care facilities must continue to postpone all surgeries and procedures that are not medically necessary to diagnose or correct a serious medical condition of, or to preserve the life of, a patient who without timely performance of the surgery or procedure would be at risk for serious adverse medical consequences or death as determined

by a patient's physician. Exceptions now include:

- Any procedure that, if performed in accordance with the commonly accepted standard of clinical practice, would not deplete the hospital capacity or the PPE needed to cope with COVID-19, or
- Any surgery or procedure performed in a licensed health care facility that has certified in writing to Texas HHSC both (1) that it will reserve at least 25% of its hospital capacity for treatment of COVID-19 patients, accounting for the range of clinical severity of COVID-19 patients, and (2) that it will not request any PPE from any public source whether federal, state, or local for the duration of the COVID-19 disaster.

The Governor today also directed state parks to reopen on Monday, April 20 with strict guidelines to reduce transmission of COVID-19 including requiring visitors to wear face coverings, maintain a six-foot distance from individuals outside of their party, and prohibiting the gathering of groups larger than five.

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