



County of Santa Cruz

Health Services Agency

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Shelter in Place: What Does it Mean?

On Monday March 16, Santa Cruz County and other Bay Area counties announced sweeping orders requiring residents to stay home except for essential needs. It will stay in effect through April 7 unless revised sooner.

What is it?

It is a legally enforceable order requiring residents to stay home except for essential needs. Everyone should stay home, especially vulnerable populations, unless you are leaving home to get food, care for others, access necessary health care, or go to an essential job (more on that later). It is OK to go outside to walk, run, bike and hike if you are not in a group and following social distancing guidelines (stay 6 feet or more away from others).

Why did we do this?

This is a critical intervention to reduce harm from the spread of the novel coronavirus, or COVID-19, in our community. History books are filled with examples of public officials who did not act quickly enough in the face of a public health crisis, leading to unnecessary death and suffering. We don't want to repeat history.

Acting quickly is essential. The virus is present in our community. Every hour counts. The cooperation of everyone will help reduce the crisis level in the community.

While this feels alarming, it is necessary. Without a vaccine or immunity, maximizing social distancing and restricting gatherings are the best tools we have to fight the virus and save lives. Our routines will be different, but we will adjust. Please be patient and kind to one another. We will get through this.

How long will we stay home?

For 3 weeks through Tuesday, April 7, 2020, unless traveling for one of the exemptions (more on that later).

Is everything closed? What's open?

Essential services remain open. The Health Officer does not want to create further negative public health consequences and has allowed certain businesses to stay open:

- City/County government services: Police stations, fire stations, hospitals/clinics and healthcare operations, jails, courts, garbage/sanitation, transportation services (including a reduced Metro schedule), utilities (water, power and gas) and more will remain open. We encourage you to use online services wherever possible.
- Gas stations
- Pharmacies
- Food: Grocery stores, farmers markets, food banks, convenience stores, take-out and delivery restaurants are all allowed to continue operating (We acknowledge that some may choose to close). Eating is essential!
- Hardware stores/plumbers
- Banks
- Some community groups and nonprofits, particularly those that service low-income or vulnerable populations
- Laundromats/laundry services
- Hotels providing shelter

What's closed?

- Restaurant dine-in services. To-go and delivery OK.
- Bars and nightclubs
- Entertainment venues
- Gyms and fitness studios

What can't I do?

You cannot engage in group activities in person with others. This includes dinner parties, bonfires, poker and card games and group exercise. You cannot go to bars or nightclubs, hair or nail salons, shopping for non-essential goods, or take unnecessary trips.

Where does this apply?

This is in effect throughout Santa Cruz County, as well as the counties of Marin, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Contra Costa, and Alameda counties.

Is this mandatory or is it just guidance?

It is mandatory! People who violate the order are subject to citation or even arrest under

California law. It is a misdemeanor not to follow the order, though we are asking for cooperation first. All residents and organizations are required to comply if they do not fall within the exemptions.

Do I go to work?

Check with your employer. If you are summoned to work, practice safe social distancing. Many businesses are essential to the health and welfare of the community and will continue operating.

What if I need to get healthcare from my medical provider?

Please continue seeing your doctor or clinician for necessary medical services. Some services, especially elective procedures, may be postponed or canceled. And remember – call first! Do not go to the emergency room of a hospital unless you are having an actual emergency. We need to protect our health care system.

Can I leave home to care for friends or family members?

Yes, we need to help each other, particularly those who are sick or have disabilities. But don't travel just to say hello – call! Together, we can fight the spread of COVID-19 by staying at home. If you need to visit, practice safe social distancing.

Can I still get deliveries from online stores? Can I order from online stores?

Yes. U.S. mail, mail order and food delivery services are allowed and continue operating. They are considered essential.

Can I use ride share or on-demand service or a taxi, or public transit?

Yes, but only for essential travel. Practice social distancing precautions and cover your mouth and nose if you cough or sneeze, use hand sanitizer, and wash your hands before and after rides.

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. We are encouraging residents to have their prescriptions delivered if possible.

Can I exercise outdoors?

Gyms and health clubs are closed, but exercise is essential to health. Exercising outdoors is acceptable but avoid groups. Practice safe social distancing.

Should I stockpile necessities?

No! Our food supply chains are healthy and the empty shelves are due to overwhelming demand at the point of sale. Grocery stores, pharmacies, and hardware stores will remain open for the duration of this order. Buy only what you need, leave some for everyone else.

What if I need medical marijuana?

Cannabis dispensaries may continue operating via delivery or pickup only. No customers are allowed to gather in the store.

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

No, with exceptions. You may accompany minors and others who need assistance to and from these facilities, but non-necessary visitation to these kinds of facilities is not allowed. We realize this is difficult, but it is necessary to protect staff and residents at these facilities.

What should I do if I'm sick and need to go to the hospital or a medical provider? How can I protect others?

Call first! If you need to go in, do so in a way that avoids exposing others to any germs you have, especially if you are seriously ill. If you are sick and can wear a surgical mask, N-95 mask or other protective gear, wear it. In a pinch, wrap a clean scarf or cloth around your mouth and nose to try to reduce droplets when you cough and sneeze.

What if I can't get out of the home? How can I get supplies and food?

Please contact friends, family, or others you know who can provide support. They are permitted to pick up any of your needs. If you receive from Meals on Wheels, Second Harvest or other community providers, check with them as many are continuing to provide services in the safest possible manner.