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Gov. Beshear Tightens Restrictions amid COVID-19

Tighter restrictions, greater sacrifices keep all Kentuckians Healthy at Home

Visit the Governor's [Facebook](#) page to watch today's news conference

FRANKFORT, Ky. (March 25, 2020) – Gov. Andy Beshear on Wednesday tightened restrictions on businesses and banned residential evictions under a state of emergency declaration aimed at addressing the ongoing novel coronavirus pandemic.

The Governor offered details about the [new executive order](#) as he warned against complacency in Kentucky's fight against the COVID-19 outbreak.

"The next two to three weeks are going to be absolutely critical in our battle against the coronavirus," Gov. Beshear said. "What you are doing is working. Your sacrifice is helpful. What we have done and the steps we are taking are helping. I am proud of what we are doing, but in these next two weeks we have to do even better."

Since the first case was detected in the commonwealth, Gov. Beshear has taken decisive action and encouraged all Kentuckians to remain Healthy at Home. Wednesday's order expands efforts to limit in-person contacts to help prevent the spread of the virus. Beginning at 8 p.m. Thursday, all non-life-sustaining businesses must close to in-person services.

Exempted businesses include grocery stores, gas stations, hardware stores and media outlets, among many others. The sale of firearms and ammunition also is exempted.

In addition, to protect Kentuckians whose livelihoods have been affected by the coronavirus response, Gov. Beshear ordered a halt to all residential evictions as long as the state of emergency remains in effect.

Dr. Steven Stack, Commissioner of the Department for Public Health, said Kentuckians are doing a lot to stop the spread of the virus, but everyone needs to do more as the state reaches a critical point in the battle.

“We are in crunch time and the next two to three weeks are critical,” said Dr. Stack.

“Kentucky – these next two weeks are about us – about us doing everything we can to blunt the curve,” Gov. Beshear said. “This is our time and we must absolutely pass this test.”

Gov. Beshear said Kentucky has its first case of someone going on spring break and testing positive for COVID-19 after returning. The Governor and Dr. Stack told those who went on spring break around gatherings of other people that they should self-isolate when they return so they do not spread COVID-19.

“Don’t go on spring break. You are going to put your health, the health of your family and the health of those around you at risk,” Gov. Beshear said.

With the number of positive cases rising quickly across both the country and the commonwealth as more testing capabilities come online, Gov. Beshear is urging everyone to stand firm against any rollbacks or lessening of defenses.

We have been expecting this and have been preparing, the Governor said. It is also why Gov. Beshear moved aggressively from the start to put Kentucky on a path to flatten the outbreak’s curve in the commonwealth and prevent our hospitals from being overwhelmed with sick patients.

Each day at 5 p.m. ET, Gov. Beshear is holding briefings for Kentuckians online at his [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#) pages.

Case information

As of 5 p.m. March 25, the Governor said that there are at least 198 confirmed positive cases with 35 of those being new. We are one of only a few states that have been able to give a report of fewer cases than the day before. The Governor also said a 75-year-old male from Jefferson County has passed away related to the virus. There are now five deaths attributed to the virus.

New actions and updates

Unemployment insurance expanded

The Governor said unemployment eligibility has been expanded effective immediately due to COVID-19. Individuals typically not covered by unemployment insurance, including self-employed, independent contractors, freelance workers, substitute teachers, childcare workers employed by religious affiliated organizations and non-profits can now file. Those who left their job for “good cause” because of reasonable risk of exposure (self-quarantine) or due to caring for a family member affected by the virus are also eligible. To file a claim, visit kcc.ky.gov.

All non-life-sustaining businesses close to in-person service

Effective on Thursday at 8 p.m., all non-life-sustaining businesses are being told to cease all in-person services.

La Tasha Buckner, the Governor's chief of staff and general counsel, provided additional information on the new executive order.

"We want everyone to be Healthy at Home, which means we want you to go to the grocery store, bank and pharmacy, but what we don't want you to do is stay in the bank or a grocery store just to be out of the house," said Buckner. "As you need those things, please go there and spend the minimum time you need to get what you need and move on."

The businesses that can stay open include: grocery stores, drug stores and pharmacies, banks, hardware stores, agricultural operations, gas stations, media, businesses needed for transportation, logistics, shipping, delivery and pick up, housing, building and construction, laundry, financial services, home-based care and services, professional services, manufacturing and other businesses key to national interests or life-sustaining goods or services, and those covered under the [federal critical infrastructure sector](#).

Most professional services, including attorneys, accountants and those in real estate, can be performed at home. As the Governor has said previously, restaurants can remain open for delivery, curbside pickup and even carry out if they follow guidelines on social distancing.

Drive-through testing

"Beginning next week we will have the first drive-through facility for the coronavirus in the commonwealth. It will start hopefully on Monday with a single location that will be for very specific individuals that are showing symptoms," said Gov. Beshear. "This is a proof of concept. Provided the proof of concept works we may be able to expand it further from there."

The Governor stated that more details on the drive-through facility would be out Thursday.

"Understand at the beginning, resources are still going to be limited. Even though we will see significantly more tests than we've seen on a large scale, we will still need to use those resources to go to those most in danger and those who are the most sick."

Presence at hospitals

The Governor said Kentuckians would begin to see National Guard and additional law enforcement at local hospitals beginning this week. "This isn't something to be concerned about. No one is patrolling your neighborhood. We are just making sure everyone inside our hospitals is safe as we see a surge in coronavirus cases. Remember the National Guard are people you work with and see every day; they just don't wear their uniform. They are going to help us get through this time to make sure we can help everyone who needs help," Gov. Beshear said.

Telehealth

The state entered new orders to allow for more telehealth than ever in Kentucky, the Governor said.

Acting Secretary Eric Friedlander of the Cabinet for Health and Family Services said state providers have a new best practice and that is to not spread the coronavirus. From substance use services to case management, the Cabinet for Health and Family Services is implementing telehealth options.

"We can do so much through virtual means and connect with health care providers and we are making it easier for everyone," said Secretary Friedlander. "We have cleared all the obstacles for

providers so they can provide telehealth and virtual in-home services to more Kentuckians to keep everyone safe.”

Video for pre-school children

Gov. Beshear shared [a video](#) aimed at young preschool children to help them understand and process being at home during this time.

From yesterday

Gov. Beshear noted that one of the new cases reported Tuesday involved someone who had attended a “coronavirus party” of people flouting the guidance about social distancing.

“This makes me mad, and it should make you mad,” Gov. Beshear said. “There is the power of forgiveness and we will move on and forgive, but there should not be any more of these parties – for any reason.”

Gov. Beshear signs school legislation

On Tuesday, Gov. Beshear signed Senate Bill 177, which allows school districts across the commonwealth the ability to request an unlimited number of non-traditional instruction days for remote learning during the coronavirus outbreak.

K-PREP tests canceled

The Kentucky Department of Education canceled plans to administer the K-PREP assessment for the 2019-2020 school year. K-PREP testing will resume in spring 2021, and current assessments will be in effect until then.

Senior meals being delivered

Gov. Beshear announced that Kentucky is significantly ahead of other Southern states in preparedness, volunteer coordination and meal delivery programs for seniors. On Monday, March 23, 11,825 meals were served statewide, an increase of 3,825 meals (150%), according to the Department of Health and Family Services.

Hand sanitizer production

The Governor said several businesses, including those in the food and beverage industries, are making barrels of hand sanitizer for hospitals and first responders.

State workers to food banks

Gov. Beshear said state workers would begin helping at food banks because of the lack of help there during the coronavirus outbreak. “Provided it is a safe environment, we will be there,” Gov. Beshear said of helping food banks that help Kentuckians in need.

Many thanked

The Governor thanked many, including an anonymous person who dropped off 4,000 swabs today. He said amazing people do amazing things when we need it most.

The Governor also thanked the state’s newspapers and TV and radio stations for conducting Public Service Announcements about social distancing and other state guidelines to combat the coronavirus.

Other actions by Gov. Beshear

Gov. Beshear, along with the Kentucky Public Protection Cabinet (PPC), took executive action

to establish the Team Kentucky Fund, a GoFundMe-style online platform to provide financial help to Kentuckians whose employment is affected by the coronavirus. The Governor challenged those who are able to help to make a tax-deductible [donation](#) to the fund.

In addition, Gov. Beshear announced the COVID-19 Reporting Hotline (833-597-2337) that will investigate complaints about non-compliance with coronavirus mandates. Labor Cabinet personnel will monitor the hotline from 7:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. ET. A new website where Kentuckians can visit to make online complaints is kysafer.ky.gov. Gov. Beshear has taken decisive actions to protect all Kentuckians since the first case was confirmed in the commonwealth. To read the full list of actions Gov. Beshear has taken to protect Kentuckians and limit the spread of the coronavirus, visit governor.ky.gov/covid19.

More information

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention encourages people to follow these [steps to prevent illness](#). Kentuckians who want advice can call the state hotline at 800-722-5725 or call their local health care provider. To read Gov. Beshear's news releases and watch other news regarding COVID-19 visit governor.ky.gov. To listen to questions from Kentuckians and media and answers from Gov. Beshear, watch his news conferences online on [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#). Gov. Beshear continues to urge Kentuckians to be cautious of rumors and depend on proven and good sources of news, including governor.ky.gov, kycovid19.ky.gov and the Governor's official social media accounts [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#).

Team Kentucky hashtags for social media

#TeamKentucky, #TogetherKY, #Patriot and new Saturday #HealthyAtHome.

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For official news and updates from the Beshear/Coleman administration, visit governor.ky.gov/news.