General Questions About the Order

Note: these FAQs will continue to be updated. Please check back for updates and clarifications.

What does this Order do?

To promote health and wellness during COVID-19, Merced County Public Health Officials amended the current Stay-At-Home Order (Order) on April 24th, 2020 to include minimum requirements for social distancing and safety plans for essential businesses. The Order also expands the definition of essential services to include drive-up services for faith-based organizations, animal care facilities, drive-through automatic car washes, and pool maintenance. Although the Order has been amended, it’s important that social distancing and safety measures remain, as we’re still at-risk for a surge of transmission in our community.

This Order continues to direct all individuals living in the County of Merced to stay at home or at their place of residence except when providing or receiving certain essential services or engaging in certain essential activities and work for essential businesses and governmental services; directing all businesses and governmental agencies to cease non-essential operations at physical locations in the county; prohibiting all non-essential gatherings of any number of individuals; and ordering cessation of all non-essential travel.

What the updated Order includes:

- The Order allows for faith-based organizations to provide weekly services through streaming or other technologies or by conducting drive-up services, where the patrons remain in their vehicles.

- All essential businesses shall be required to develop a Social Distancing and Safety Plan.

Animal care facilities that provide food, shelter, veterinary and/or routine care and other necessities of life for animals are considered essential businesses.
Drive-through automatic car wash businesses, where customers remain in their vehicles with no cash exchange, are now deemed essential. Vacuum centers associated with car washes shall remain closed. Social distancing must still occur with a six-foot distance between customers and employees.

Pool maintenance services are now allowed.

When does the Order go into effect?
The first Stay-At-Home Order went into effect on March 20th, 2020. This updated Order supersedes the April 17th, 2020 Order and went into effect on April 24th, 2020.

How long does the Order last?
The Order is currently set to last until it is rescinded, superseded or amended. How long the restrictions take place will depend on what the County Health Officer decides is necessary to protect public health.

Can the Order be changed?
Yes. The Health Officer may make changes to the Order as more information emerges about the public health situation and issue new orders and directive as conditions warrant. For updates regularly check the Merced County website at [http://www.countyofmerced.com/coronavirus](http://www.countyofmerced.com/coronavirus). The County is working with the media to share important updates and information as they become available.

Where is the Order in effect?
This Order is in effect across all of Merced County, including incorporated and unincorporated areas.

Who issued the Order?
This Order was issued by the Merced County Public Health Officer after conferring with health officials. The Health Officer has the authority under state law to issue Orders to protect the health and welfare of everyone in their jurisdictions.

What happens if I don’t comply with this Order?
Failure to comply with the Order is a misdemeanor punishable by fine, county jail sentencing, or both.

Why is this Order in place?
This Order is in place to address the ongoing spread of the virus that causes COVID-19 in Merced County. There is substantial community transmission of the virus, which is easily spread between people. One big challenge in controlling the transmission of the virus is that many people who have it don’t have symptoms or have mild symptoms. However; people can easily spread the virus even if they don’t feel ill. The virus also lasts a long time on many surfaces (from hours to days).
Unfortunately, this virus can cause severe symptoms in some people and can also be fatal. Some who get the virus, especially those over 60 years old, those who have weak immune systems, and those with various medical conditions (see below for a full list), can end up with serious complications that include fever, pneumonia, and in some instances death. There is no approved treatment or cure for COVID-19. That means that people who get very sick need medical intervention such as oxygen or help breathing.

Because the virus spreads so easily, without dramatic intervention like this Order, it would result in so many people needing medical attention in a hospital setting that our hospitals will be overwhelmed. We may not have enough beds or equipment to adequately care for the most seriously ill. Our health care workers and other first responders are also at risk, and if they get sick there are fewer people to provide health care and first response services.

For these reasons, it is critical that we now do everything in our power to slow down the spread of the virus. Doing so will help to “flatten the curve” to slow down the spread of the virus and help our health care system not be overwhelmed. If this succeeds, it means that there will be health care available for those who get sick with COVID-19 or who need emergency medical care for accidents, heart attacks, strokes, and other serious medical conditions. We all have to do our part now to protect everyone in the community. The best way to do that is to “socially isolate” yourself at home to avoid further spread of the virus.

Staying Home
What is the difference between “stay-at-home” and “social distancing”? Staying at home is a more rigorous form of social distancing. Staying at home means you:

- Can only leave your home for “essential activities,” to work for an “essential business,” or for “essential travel,” which are defined in the Order (see FAQs for details).

- Cannot host or attend any gatherings.

- Should also maintain a six foot distance from other people as much as possible, wash your hands with soap and water frequently for at least 20 seconds each time (or use hand sanitizer), frequently disinfect high-touch surfaces, and stay home if you are sick.
Can I leave home to visit friends or family members if there is no urgent need or I am not performing an essential activity (as defined under the Order)?
No. We need to help each other fight the spread of COVID-19 by staying home. For your safety as well as the safety of your loved ones, stay home.

Can I still get my 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 home?
Yes. Businesses that deliver essential goods or services directly to residences may continue to operate.

Can I go out to do my laundry or have my laundry done?
Yes. Maintain social distancing while outside of your home.

Can I leave home to go to the pharmacy to get my prescription filled?
Yes. Drug stores and other medical supply stores are essential and will continue to operate under this Order. For your safety, whenever possible, you should have prescription medicines and healthcare supplies delivered to your home.

What if I need to get healthcare from my medical provider?
You can still get your health needs addressed. Contact your health care provider to see if they are providing regular services. Some services, especially elective procedures, may be postponed or canceled. If you are feeling sick, please first call your doctor, a nurse hotline, or an urgent care center. Do not go to the emergency room of a hospital unless you are having an actual medical emergency.

Can I still seek non-essential medical care like eye exams, teeth cleaning, elective procedures, etc.?
Generally, you should postpone non-essential medical and dental care if possible. If it can wait, then wait. Check with your provider 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.

Should I stock up on essential items such as food, toilet paper, and medicines?
No. You will continue to be able to purchase essential items. Stores selling necessary items like grocery stores, pharmacies, and hardware stores will remain open. Please
continue to buy normal quantities of these items on the same schedule you normally follow. This will ensure that there is enough for everyone.

What should I do if I’m sick? If I or a family member need immediate medical attention, can I leave home to go to the doctor or hospital?
Call 9-1-1 or go to an emergency room if you are experiencing a medical emergency. Do not go to the emergency room of a hospital unless you have a medical emergency. If you or your family member are feeling sick and it’s not a medical emergency, you should seek medical advice. First call your doctor, a nurse hotline, or an urgent care center before going to the hospital.

Can I leave home to care for my elderly parents or friends who require assistance to care for themselves? Or a friend or family member who has disabilities?
Yes. Be extremely cautious when providing care to vulnerable people and ensure that you protect them and yourself by following social distancing guidelines such as washing hands before and after, using hand sanitizer, maintaining at least 6 feet of distance when possible, and coughing or sneezing into a tissue.

Can I visit loved ones in the hospital, nursing home, skilled nursing facility, or other residential care facility?
You may visit a hospital or other healthcare facility only for the purpose of obtaining health care services and supplies. Non-essential visitations are not permitted. Do not visit a nursing home, skilled nursing facility, or residential care facility other than for the purpose of securing care. People over 60 years of age are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19.

Can I leave home to attend services at my church, synagogue, mosque or place of worship?
All places of worship are required to stay closed and offer remote access to their services because the Order does not allow for non-essential gatherings of any number of individuals. Many places of worship now offer remote access to their services, such as by email, video streaming, or teleconference. Further, the State of California issued a clarification of the Governor’s Order on April 17, 2020. More specifically, the State confirmed that in-person services are prohibited but clarified that “…drive-in worship services are permitted under the existing Executive Order, which expressly allows “faith based services that are provided through…other technology,” as long as the individuals engaged in such services abide by physical distancing guidelines and refrain from direct and indirect physical touching of others.”
In other words, faith-based services that are provided through streaming or other technology including drive-in services where patrons remain in their vehicle, are considered essential under the Governor’s Order. Merced County Health Officer Orders and guidance documents can be found at: https://www.co.merced.ca.us/DocumentCenter/View/24363/Press-Release-with-Health-Order-Amended-April-4-2020?bidId=

I operate a funeral home. Are funeral services allowed?
Yes, with restrictions. Gatherings are a significant contributor to the spread of COVID-19, requiring restrictions to allow for a balance between safety and beliefs, rituals, and traditions. Visitors will not be allowed, if the following guidelines cannot be followed:

- Funeral services or viewings are not allowed to take place off-site or in a private home.
- While direct burial or direct cremation with no persons in attendance is preferred, funeral services may take place by remote access through video streaming, cemetery graveside, or cemetery drive-through with as few people present as possible.
- No more than 10 persons including clergy and technical assistance shall be present for funeral services; no rotation of those 10 persons is allowed.
- Family shall disclose to clergy if decedent is COVID-19 positive.
- No ill persons shall be in attendance of funeral services or viewings.
- All persons must wear a mask and maintain social distancing of 6 feet from other individuals.
- Mortuary visitation or viewing shall be no more than 30 minutes.
- Graveside visits shall be for no more than 15 minutes. No more than 10 cars are allowed at a cemetery. Cemeteries are temporarily closed for regular visitation, at this time.

Can I host a memorial service or a traditional ceremony in my home and invite family and friends to attend?
No, for your safety as well as the safety of your loved ones, do not invite family members, friends or guest into your home that do not live with you. The Order does not allow for any non-essential gathering of any number of individuals.

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. You can order food and other supplies, and have them delivered to your home. If you think you might be eligible for meals on
Can I leave home to exercise?
You are encouraged to find alternative means of exercise in the safety of your home. Under this Order you are allowed to go outside to exercise (includes walks, hikes, bike rides) as long as you practice social distance (six feet or more away from persons who are not part of your household). To avoid spread of the virus, do not invite friends or other family members to exercise with you if they do not live in the same household as you. Fitness centers, exercise gyms, recreational centers, and public pools are not permitted to operate.

Green open spaces at parks will now be accessible to residents, along with park pathways. The picnic areas, BBQs, and other related facilities at parks will remain closed. Individuals at golf courses, or using the walking trails, bicycle paths and green spaces in the parks will be required to continue social distancing and are advised to wear face cloth covering while outside of their homes.

Golf courses and parks are required to be closed for the upcoming major holiday weekends – Mother’s Day, Memorial Day, Father’s Day, and 4th of July.

I feel anxious being home, can I go to the park? Can I travel to a County park or open space if I social distance?
In an effort to promote health and wellness, Merced County Public Health Officials have amended the current Stay-At-Home Order allowing modified recreation in parks and golf courses. The amended Order is effective immediately and supersedes the prior Order issued on April 17th, 2020.

For your safety, you should remain home and seek a healthy alternative method to address your feelings of anxiousness. However, under this Order, you are allowed to go outside for a walk, hike, or bike ride to exercise as long as you practice social distancing (see above Q&A).

Are Parks open and can I visit them?
Green open spaces at parks will now be accessible to residents, along with park pathways. The picnic areas, BBQs, and other related facilities at parks will remain closed. Individuals at golf courses, or using the walking trails, bicycle paths and green spaces in the parks will be required to continue social distancing and are advised to wear face cloth covering while outside of their homes.

Can I take my kids to the park and can we use playgrounds?
No, playgrounds are closed under the Order. You can take walks, ride your bicycle and use the open green spaces, but the park facilities and equipment remain closed under the amended Order. Proper social distancing must continued to be maintained.
Can golf courses remain open, if I social distance myself from others?
The Order allows for golf courses to resume operations, under an approved operational guideline. Golf courses will be able to operate with restrictions. All clubhouse and indoor facilities are and shall remain closed, including, but not limited to the Pro Shop, Bar, and Restaurants.

Note these guidelines are a compilation of many clubs’ best practices. These are the minimum requirements that must be enforced; Clubs are able to enforce policies that are more stringent if they feel they are necessary to ensure the health and safety of persons using their facilities. The approved operational guideline can be found at: https://www.co.merced.ca.us/DocumentCenter/View/24363/Press-Release-with-Health-Order-Amended-April-4-2020?bidId=

Golf courses and parks are required to be closed for the upcoming major holiday weekends – Mother’s Day, Memorial Day, Father’s Day, and 4th of July.

Can I go shopping for things other than food/groceries?
Yes, but you should minimize unnecessary trips. You can shop for anything that is related to health care, hardware supplies, supplies needed to telecommute, and supplies essential to safety and sanitation.

Can I go to a bar/nightclub/theater?
No. Entertainment venues shall remain closed under the Stay-At-Home Order.

Can I go to a restaurant, café, coffee or tea shop, ice cream shop, or other foodservice locations?
Yes, but only to pick up food items. You cannot dine-in (eat or drink) inside or around the facility.

I don’t cook—can I leave my home to purchase meals?
Restaurants, cafes, food trucks, and similar retailers remain open. You can purchase prepared foods at grocery stores, certified farmers’ markets, and other such food retailers.

Can I walk my dog/pet?
Yes, you can walk your dog/pet. However, you must distance yourself at least six feet from others who are not part of your household.

Can I take my pet to the vet, pet hospital, or groomer?
Yes. Please call first to determine if the facility has any restrictions in place. Animal care facilities that provide food, shelter, veterinary and/or routine care and other
necessities of life for animals including dog grooming facilities, dog day care facilities, animal rescue facilities, and boarding facilities are considered essential.

Facilities are required to:
• Keep a six-foot distance between customers and employees/owners.
• Properly disinfecting affected surfaces and equipment.

How can I access free or reduced-price meals for myself or my family?
Schools, soup kitchens, food banks, and other entities that provide free or reduced priced food or meals to the public are encouraged to continue providing these services. You must pick up and take away the food or have it brought to you. Do not eat on the premises of the facility.

Can I carry out a court-ordered visit with my kids?
Yes. The Order exempts travel by court order or law enforcement.

Business, Employment, and Government Services
Will all business offices and stores be required to close?
No. “Essential businesses” may keep their facilities open (and are encouraged to keep them open) to continue providing essential services and products to the public. Employees may leave home to go to these jobs. Non-essential businesses may keep facilities open only to maintain minimum basic operations, such as maintaining the value of an inventory, keeping the site secure, or ensuring that employees are able to work remotely. The Order does not prohibit any employees from working from home.

What are “Essential Businesses”?
The Order provides the following list of “Essential Businesses”:
• Healthcare Operations and Essential Infrastructure
• 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 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.
• 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 (not for retail business), as well as business activities that support production and processing by providing essential agricultural supplies and services, including but not limited to, transportation, manufacturing, chemicals, equipment, and services such as cooling, storing, packing, and distribution of such products for wholesale or retail sale.
• Businesses that provide food, shelter, and social services, and other necessities of life for economically disadvantaged or otherwise needy individuals.
• Newspapers, television, radio, and other media services.
• Gas stations and auto-supply, auto dealerships, auto-repair, and related facilities.
• Banks and related financial institutions.
• Hardware stores.
• Laundromats, drycleaners, and laundry service providers.
• Plumbers, electricians, exterminators, custodial/janitorial workers, handyman services, funeral home workers and morticians, moving services, HVAC installers, carpenters, vegetation services, tree maintenance, pool maintenance services, landscapers, gardeners, property managers, private security personnel and other service providers who provide services to maintain the safety, sanitation, and essential operation to properties and other Essential Businesses.
• Businesses providing mailing and shipping services, including post office boxes.
• 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.
• Restaurants and other facilities that prepare and serve food, but only for 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.
• Businesses that supply products needed for people to work from home.
• Businesses that supply other essential businesses with the support or supplies necessary to operate.
• Businesses that ship or deliver groceries, food, goods or services directly to residences.
• Airlines, taxis, and other private transportation providers providing transportation services necessary for Essential Activities and other purposes expressly authorized in this Order.
• Home-based care for seniors, adults, or children.
• Residential facilities and shelters for seniors, adults, and children.
• Professional services, such as legal or accounting services, when necessary to assist in compliance with legally mandated activities.
• Delivery services that provide transport of essential products, such as water, food and household products.
• 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:
  • 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).
  • Children shall not change from one group to another.
  • 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.
• Childcare providers shall remain solely with one group of children.
• Animal care facilities that provide food, shelter, veterinary and/or routine care and other necessities of life for animals including dog grooming facilities, dog day care facilities, animal rescue facilities, and boarding facilities when keeping a six-foot distance between customers and employees/owners and properly disinfecting affected surfaces and equipment.
• Drive-thru automatic car wash businesses where customers remain in their cars and where the vacuum centers are closed, and mobile detailing services, keeping a six-foot distance between customers and employees with no cash exchange.

I run an essential business, as defined by the Order. Do I need to get an official letter of authorization from the County to operate?
No. If your business is on the list of Essential Businesses, then you may operate it. You do not need to obtain any specific authorization from the County to operate. However, all essential businesses in operation are required to develop a “Social Distancing and Safety Plan” no later than Friday, May 1st, 2020 at 8:00 am.

I work for an essential business, as defined by the Order. Do I need to have a letter from my employer or other documentation to travel?
No, you do not need to carry official documentation demonstrating that you are exempt under the Order. Be prepared to explain if requested by law enforcement why your travel is authorized under the Order.

What are “Essential Businesses” required to do to operate?
All essential businesses shall be required to develop a Social Distancing and Safety Plan no later than Friday, May 1st, 2020 at 8:00 am. Individual jurisdictions may create stricter guidelines for implementation.

The following minimum requirements must be included within each Social Distancing and Safety Plan:
 a. Limitation of capacity of business to 5 people per 1,000 square feet.
 b. Door monitoring of individuals in and out of doors to ensure appropriate numbers are maintained.
 c. One adult may enter the business per party/cart. No large family visits.
 d. Provide hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes at all entrances and exits.
 e. Social distancing must be ensured through:
   i. Clearly marked one-way aisles
   ii. Clearly marked check-out lines with at least 6 feet in between customers
   iii. Clearly marked lines for entry into the business with at least 6 feet in between customers.
 f. Employees shall wipe down all carts and baskets using disinfectant.
 g. Provide adequate handwashing facilities for employees.
h. All employees must wear cloth masks, to be provided by the employer.

i. All visitors to a business should wear a cloth mask. Individuals not wearing a mask may be denied entry into the business.

j. Customers must bag their own groceries/items when bringing reusable bags. Employees shall use new bags when bagging customer groceries/items.

k. All workers who are able to telecommute should be allowed to do so.

l. All workers must be given adequate protections whenever possible, including social distancing of employees at least 6 feet from each other, and/or shields between employees and customers.

m. Universal screening of all employees for fever, cough, and shortness of breath shall occur (already included in the Febrile Respiratory Illness Health Officer Order dated April 7, 2020).

I operate a farm, am I allowed to continue my operation and have employees report to work?
Yes, cultivation, processing and production of agriculture and farming is considered an essential business.

What if my business is not considered an essential business?
Does this Order require that I close my business facility?
You and your employees are allowed to perform “Minimum Basic Operations” at your workplace, so long as employees maintain a distance of six feet from one another to the greatest extent feasible. Minimum Basic Operations include maintaining the value of inventory, ensuring security, and ensuring that employees can work remotely. Other than to maintain “Minimum Basic Operations,” employees can only work remotely from their residences.

I currently receive benefits through Merced County’s Human Services Agency. Will this Order interrupt my benefits?
No, the Human Services Agency is considered an essential government function and will continue to operate. Contact the office directly if you have questions regarding operational services/hours.

Does this Order require that schools shut down?
This Order requires that all schools stop holding classes at physical locations within the County. However, schools may provide distance learning to their students. Employees of schools may go to work for the purpose of providing distance learning to their students. Schools can also continue to offer students free and reduced-price lunches for takeaway or delivery, which many schools are doing in Merced County.

Will this order prevent companies working on vaccines and testing for COVID-19 from continuing to do that work?
No. This Order exempts any business that is performing work related to the delivery of health care.
I am in the business of manufacturing food that I supply to grocery stores and other food retailers. Am I required to close?
No. All suppliers of essential businesses are allowed (and encouraged) to continue operations. This includes businesses that supply food goods and prepared meals to grocery stores and other food retailers.

**Does the Order require that businesses stop work that is necessary to our health care system?**
No. The Order exempts any business that is performing work related to the delivery of health care.

**Can my company continue construction on a health care facility?**
Yes, the Order exempts any business that is performing work related to the delivery of health care.

**Can my company tend to its labs under this Order?**
You and your employees are allowed to perform “Minimum Basic Operations” on site at your work place, so long as employees maintain a distance of six feet from one another to the greatest extent feasible. If tending to the company’s labs is necessary to maintaining the value of inventory, the Order allows for this work to continue. Other than that, your lab may only operate if it performs work exempted in the Order.

**My business principally manufactures, supplies, or repairs cell phones. Can it continue to operate?**
Yes. If your business is primarily engaged in supply or repair of cell phones or other telecommunications devices, then it is essential and may continue to operate under the Order.

**Are non-profit organizations allowed to continue operation?**
If they provide essential services as described in the Order, then yes, they can and should continue providing those services. This would include non-profits operating food pantries, providing housing for homeless residents, and providing other critical services.

**What if some of the work my business does at its facility is essential and some is nonessential?**
Your business can continue to operate its facility to carry out its essential business functions. You must maximize remote work and comply with social distancing requirements at the facility. The facility cannot continue to carry out nonessential business functions.
I operate a “big box store” that sells some clothing in addition to groceries, electronics, and hardware. Do I close off the part of my store that sells non-essential supplies?
No. You may keep your entire store open if it primarily sells essential goods and supplies like food, medicines, and telecommunication supplies.

What if I have a cafeteria at my worksite. Can it continue to operate to serve workers who are carrying out work exempted in the Order?
The cafeteria can operate like other food facilities. It can serve food to the remaining employees, so long as the employees take the food away and do not eat it in the cafeteria. The cafeteria should follow the social distancing requirements in the Order.

Is the local government shutting down?
No, essential government functions will continue, including first responders, emergency management personnel, emergency dispatchers, and law enforcement. Other government functions or offices may be subject to reduced schedules or may be closed as part of the effort to fight the spread of COVID-19.

I work for the government - can I continue to go to work?
Government employees can continue to go to work if they are designated as essential employees by their employer. Each government entity is responsible for determining which of its workers are essential workers.

What do I do if my employer requires me to go to work?
Many businesses are not permitted to operate under this Order. Essential businesses, as defined in the Order, are allowed (and encouraged) to continue operating. If you work at a business that is not essential, you are not permitted to go to work and your employer is not permitted to require you to attend except to sustain minimum basic operations, as that term is defined in the Order. You may work from home if your work permits.

I work in a hospital or medical clinic, but I’m not sure I’m essential. Should I continue to work? What if I’m over 60?
ALL employees of hospitals, clinics, and other organizations that provide healthcare, provide services to healthcare organizations, provide needed supplies to healthcare organizations, or otherwise maintain healthcare operations of all kinds may continue working. Both the County’s Order and the Governor’s recent guidance allows essential workers over 60 to continue working, even though others in that age group are being directed to stay home.

What do I do about my kids? I have to work.
If you work for an essential business, as described in the Order, you can and should
continue to work. Certain employers, schools, and community organizations will be providing childcare for employees of essential businesses. You may also employ a nanny or babysitter to provide home-based care for your kids.

**Can bike repair shops continue to operate?**
Yes, bike repair shops are treated as an essential business (the same as auto repair shops) because they are necessary to facilitate essential travel.

**Can my company continue to provide janitorial services?**
Yes, janitorial services are allowed as necessary to health and sanitation.

**Can grocery stores, farmers markets, and other food retailers remain open?**
Yes. Grocery stores, certified farmers’ markets, farm and produce stands, supermarkets, food banks, convenience stores, and similar food retail establishments are encouraged to remain open to provide food and pet supplies to the public. When visiting these establishments, please help retailers maintain at least six feet minimum distance between patrons, including by providing ample space while shopping and waiting in line.

**If my child’s school is providing food or meals, can I leave home to go to the school to pick up the food or meals?**
Yes, you are allowed to pick up the food or meals and return home to eat the food or meals. Do not eat them on the premises.

**Can warehouses and distribution centers that supply businesses that ship and deliver stay open?**
Yes.

**I work for an essential infrastructure organization - can I leave home to go to work?**
Yes. You can go to work to maintain and operate essential infrastructure, including public works construction, commercial and residential construction, airport operations, water, sewer, gas, electrical, oil refining, roads and highways, public transportation, solid waste collection and removal, internet, and telecommunications systems (including the provision of essential global, national, and local infrastructure for computing services, business infrastructure, communications, and web-based services).

**What construction is allowed to continue?**
The Order only exempts construction of housing, commercial, public works, and medical and health care related facilities.
What if I want to go to work at a physical location in the County and I’m not sick?
Unless your work is exempted in the Order, you cannot go to work at a physical location in the County. You may work from home for any business if your employer allows it.

Can I operate a business that sells things that can be delivered to people’s homes? Can I shift more of my business to a delivery model?
Deliveries can continue to be sent to people’s homes, and you may adjust your business model accordingly while this Order is in place.

My business provides critical services and products for the federal government that we are required to provide on a time - certain basis - can I continue to manufacture these products?
Employees and contractors of any governmental entity may continue to provide the services and products if the governmental entity determines that they are necessary to carry out an essential governmental function.

I work in a cemetery - can I go to work?
Yes, cemeteries are essential infrastructure.

Are daycare facilities allowed to operate?
Daycare facilities may operate, but only if they comply with the mandatory conditions set forth below and only to provide daycare to the children of employees who are exempted under the Order. This includes employees of essential businesses, employees who are providing for minimum basic operations of non-essential businesses, and governmental employees providing essential governmental functions.

To operate, daycare facilities must comply with the following mandatory conditions:
- Childcare must be carried out in stable groups of 12 or fewer children (meaning that the same 12 or fewer children are in the same group each day)
- Children cannot change from one group to another
- If more than one group of children is cared for at one facility, each group must be in a separate room. Groups cannot mix with each other.
- Childcare provided must remain solely with one group of children. They cannot rotate between groups.

Can home service workers who clean homes continue to provide their services?
Home service workers may provide their services if necessary for health and sanitation.
If I operate a non-essential business with a retail storefront, am I allowed to re-configure my business to deliver products to people’s homes?
No, for your safety and the safety of others, stay at home.

I am a nanny. Will I get in trouble if I go to work?
The Order permits nannies and babysitters caring for a child in the child’s own home to continue working.

Travel
Can I get a ride in my favorite ride share/on demand service or a taxi?
Yes, but these services can only be used for “essential activities,” to get to and from work to operate “essential businesses,” or to provide “essential governmental functions,” which are defined in the Order. Keep in mind that being in close quarters in a vehicle that has been shared with many others should be avoided if possible.

Can I take public transport (bus, subway, train)?
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.” When using public transport, you should maintain at least 6 feet distance from one another (2 or 3 steps away), including if you are on the bus or on trains.

Am I allowed to leave the areas covered by this Order to travel to and from a job outside the Bay Area? Does the Order allow me to leave the County?
Yes, but only to perform “essential activities,” operate “essential businesses,” or to maintain “essential governmental functions,” as those terms are defined in the Order. Otherwise, the answer is no because that puts you and others in the community at risk.

I am currently on vacation outside the County — does the Order allow me to return home?
Yes. The Order permits you to travel to return home.

I am outside the County travelling for business — does the Order allow me to return home?
Yes. The Order permits you to travel to return home.
I’m visiting and staying in a hotel, with family/friends, or in a short-term rental. What should I do? Can I go home?
Yes, you can leave the County for the purpose of returning home.

Other Questions
What if I’m in a line and there isn’t six feet between me and others?
You should still try to maintain at least six feet between you and others. When that isn’t possible for short periods, do your best to keep the duration short. And be sure when in line you don’t sneeze or cough onto people. If needed, cough or sneeze into your shirt or into an elbow with clothing on, not into your hand.

What if my plumbing gets stopped up or there is another problem with necessary equipment at my home? How will I access those sorts of services?
Call your plumber or building manager. This Order allows service providers like plumbers, electricians, and exterminators to keep working and providing their services to the public. To obtain supplies for a DIY solution, you can also visit your hardware store, which is allowed to stay open under this Order.

What do I do about my loved one who needs care from me?
You are permitted to provide care or to help out with getting supplies for loved ones, even if they do not live in your household. But do not provide care or pick up supplies if you are sick and someone else can help them. If you are sick, please try to self-isolate or take other steps not to expose anyone else to your illness.

Stay Informed on COVID-19:
Always check with reliable sources for the up-to-date, accurate information about novel coronavirus.
- Merced County Department of Public Health
  - https://www.co.merced.ca.us/3350/Coronavirus-Disease-2019
- California Department of Public Health (CDPH, State)
  - https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/nCOV2019.aspx
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, National)
- World Health Organization (WHO, International)
  - https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus
- United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)
  - https://www.epa.gov/coronavirus
PLEASE NOTE: This is an evolving situation. More information will be distributed as it becomes available. For the most up to date information, please visit: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus and https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/coronavirus-covid-19-supply-chain-update. Additional information is available at: www.countyofmerced.com/coronavirus.