



---

---

**PRESS RELEASE**  
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**April 1, 2020**

**Joint Information Center Established for the Most  
Up to Date COVID-19 Information and Washington County Update Provided**

**Joint Information Center (JIC)**

An information center has been established within Washington County EMS to provide local elected officials and media outlets the most up to date COVID-19 information, from various agencies. “This is a strong collaborative effort from many community partners,” says Judge John Durrenberger. The JIC is made up of: Washington County emergency management officials, the City of Brenham, the Chamber of Commerce, local school districts, Blinn, and Baylor Scott and White. We are in a time of fast-paced ever-changing information and in an “all hands-on deck” effort to provide facts, local entities have joined forces. This *single point of contact* provides state and local media outlets as well as County and City elected officials a source for the latest, real-time information. “There has never been a time where our community needed to come together like it does now,” says Mayor Milton Tate. “The teamwork between so many partners just shows who we are as a community,” he adds.

## Washington County Updates

### Positive COVID-19 Cases and Patient Status

There are 16 positive cases of COVID-19 in Washington County, with 15 patients self-quarantined and recovering at home and one patient hospitalized. “We want to encourage the community to keep these people in our thoughts and prayers, not just as a new numbered case, but as fellow community members,” says Kevin Deramus, Director of Washington County EMS.

As positive cases increase, questions and rumors abound. According to privacy laws and regulations, when a person tests positive, only certain information may be shared. We will continue to provide a list of positive cases, age range, and gender. These cases are immediately turned over to health officials where they gather and track the details and contact those that may have been exposed. No matter if travel or community spread, we ask everyone to continue focusing on **prevention**:

- Wash your hands often, for 20 seconds
- Social distance – keep 6 feet of distance between you and others
- Remain out of congregate settings of 10 or more people if you must go out
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or the bend of your elbow
- Avoiding touching your face
- Disinfect frequently touched surfaces

Remember that social distancing doesn't have to mean social disengagement. Take a few minutes today to call, FaceTime, text, or video chat with someone that might need to hear a comforting voice. And, reach out to the elderly or those that may need a helping hand. There are many creative ways to help others during this time of social distancing.

## **Governor Abbott's Executive Orders, as of March 31, 2020**

Governor Abbot issued additional Executive Orders:

- Implementing Essential Services and Activities Protocol for Texas. This means that all Texans are to minimize non-essential gatherings and in-person contact with people who are not in the same household
- Renewing and amending the federal social distancing guidelines, effective 12:01AM on April 2, 2020 until April 30, 2020, including closing seating in restaurants, food courts, and bars, visiting gyms, massage establishments, and it expanded to include tattoo and piercing studios and cosmetology salons
- Exemptions are allowed for essential activities and services such as: healthcare, grocery stores, banking and financial services, utilities, child care for essential service employees, and government services.
- Schools will remain temporarily closed to in-person classroom attendance through May 4, 2020

The Governor said the Executive Order shouldn't be considered a "stay at home" or "shelter in place" order because Texans are allowed to leave home to engage in "essential services." This executive order does not prohibit people from engaging in essential daily activities, providing or obtaining other essential services, visiting parks, hunting or fishing, or engaging in physical activity like jogging or bicycling, so long as the necessary precautions are maintained to reduce the transmission of COVID-19 and to minimize in-person contact with people who are not in the same household. "Texans are expected to limit personal interactions that can lead to the spread of COVID-19," said Governor Abbott. "While also still having the freedom to conduct daily activities such as going to the grocery store."

## **Parks**

According to Texas Parks and Wildlife, Texas parks will remain open to give individuals a healthy way to get outdoors. However, several changes have been made to help protect the health and wellbeing of state park visitors, volunteers, and staff. Washington County does not have authority to close state parks, this includes Washington on the Brazos State Park. We encourage everyone to continue using good judgement in social distancing when visiting parks.

City of Brenham parks remain open but public restrooms have been closed to help reduce the spread of COVID-19. City Council will meet this week to discuss the possible closure of playgrounds and courts. Greenspaces would remain open.

## **Economic Impact**

As part of so many other collaborative efforts, economic development and recovery is no different. Community partners including the Small Business Development Corporation (SBDC), Washington County officials, the City of Brenham, the Chamber of Commerce and others have rallied together to help our local businesses. We encourage everyone to please continue supporting Washington County businesses as many have adjusted the way they serve by offering online, drive-thru service, delivery, or pick up options. It is essential to each business and to our community that we all rally around them at this time.

As we all continue on a journey of so many unknowns, we must remember that we are a strong community and together we will get through this. Let us continue to focus on the facts, do our part to reduce the spread, support our local businesses, and lend a hand to those in need.

Word Count: 942

Attachments: None

###