



## JOINT NEWS RELEASE

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Berrien County Officials React to Extension of the "Stay Home, Stay Safe" Executive Order in Michigan**

(Berrien County, Michigan) – Governor Gretchen Whitmer formally extended the ["Stay Home, Stay Safe" Executive Order](#) until April 30<sup>th</sup> with a few important additions. The Executive Order 2020-42 limits gatherings and travel and requires all workers who are not necessary to sustain or protect life to stay home. As a reminder, under this order all public and private gatherings of any number of people occurring among persons not part of a single household are prohibited. The order also states that after April 10, 2020 travel between two residences is not permitted.

Though you may leave the house to get groceries or needed supplies, the new order encourages people to limit the number of household members running errands to the maximum extent possible. As before, people may engage in outdoor activities like walking, hiking, running, cycling, kayaking, canoeing, or any other recreational activity, consistent with remaining at least six feet from people from outside a person's household. The order clarifies, however, that travel for vacations or for any other purpose is prohibited. It also states that no advertising or renting of a short-term vacation property except as necessary to assist in housing a health care professional or volunteer aiding in the response to the COVID-19 crisis is allowed.

While outdoor activity is permitted under this order, any outdoor activity, including boating, must be done in a manner consistent with social distancing, and individuals not part of a single household may not boat together. Getting outdoors for exercise and fresh air is encouraged, but it is crucial though that people maintain the six feet distance from people not from their household, especially when at public parks.

Berrien County Parks Director, Brian Bailey, stated "We want to keep our public parks open for people to enjoy, while maintaining proper social distancing. We are putting up additional signage at Silver Beach County Park and other County Parks to remind people of the need to maintain a six foot distance from others. If our residents don't comply with this order, we may have to close the parks, and that is not something we want to do."



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A new section of the order imposes restrictions on stores in an effort to reduce crowds. Stores larger than 50,000 square feet must limit the number of people in the store at one time to no more than 4 customers for every 1,000 square feet of customer floor space; small stores less than 50,000 square feet must limit capacity to 25% of the total occupancy limits (including employees) under the current fire codes. To regulate entry, stores must establish lines with markings for patrons to enable them to stand at least six feet apart from one another while waiting. Large stores must also close areas of the store that are not essential which includes; carpeting, flooring, furniture, gardening centers, plant nurseries, or paint. Although not required to close off part of the store, smaller stores are also not allowed to sell these non-essential items.

For the purposes of this order, critical infrastructure workers are those workers described by the U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency in [guidance on the COVID-19 response](#). This order does not adopt any subsequent guidance document by this same agency.

Prosecutor Mike Sepic stated, "Law enforcement is doing an excellent job answering complaints and educating the public including businesses of the Order, and encouraging compliance. While some of the Orders have subtle nuances, law enforcement is taking the necessary approach interpreting the Orders in a way that less in-person contact is so very critical. I completely endorse that approach and will support any such prosecutions." Residents who wish to report a violation to the Executive Orders can fill out an [online tip form](#) found at the Berrien County Sheriff's Website.

Berrien County Health Department Health Officer, Nicki Britten says, "As we enter into this holiday weekend, we know that many sacrifices are being made to abide by these protective measures. Maintaining social distancing when we want to be close to our friends and extended families is very difficult. But these strategies are vitally important to the success our community will have in slowing the spread of the virus."

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