

MEDIA RELEASE

ERIE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 21, 2020

CONTACT:

Melissa J. Dixon
mdixon@eriecountypa.gov
814-812-0089

COUNTY OF ERIE
OFFICE OF THE
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Erie County to enforce order set forth by Governor Wolf to close all non-life-sustaining businesses

Erie, PA – County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper and Acting Environmental Branch Director Karen Tobin today announced plans to enforce actions against all non-life-sustaining businesses that do not close physical locations, beginning Monday, March 23, at 8 a.m.

Governor Tom Wolf ordered all non-life-sustaining businesses in Pennsylvania to close their physical locations to slow the spread of COVID-19. Enforcement actions were originally scheduled to begin March 21 at 12:01 a.m., but then extended that date to Monday. A list of life-sustaining businesses can be found here:

<https://eriecountypa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/03.20.2020-updated-GOV-COVID-Life-Sustaining-Business-list.pdf>.

Erie County Department of Health staff is taking calls to address questions and concerns. They are working with essential businesses to ensure safe operation and assist them with being compliant with the Governor's order. The focus is to operate safely and protect workers and the public, and to take every precaution possible, including:

- Social distancing
- Cleaning and sanitizing surfaces and equipment
- Thorough hand washing and hand sanitizing
- Prohibiting workers with any symptoms of illness to work

They will also be enforcing crowd control.

Guidelines for businesses:

- Businesses are not permitted to do anything that encourages crowd gatherings or long lines where customers are standing close together.
- Businesses must limit the number of customers/visitors at a time.
- Businesses must have an employee monitoring visitors and stressing social distancing.

– more –

Guidelines for food facilities:

Restaurants:

- Focus on drive thru, curbside pickup and delivery to limit customer contact.
- Take payments over the phone to limit money and credit card handling.
- Options for carry-out:
 - Limit the number of customers inside at one time.
 - Post a sign with a phone number and an instruction telling customers to call it when they arrive.
 - The public should stagger meal times to avoid big crowds at noon, 5 p.m., etc.
 - It is OK to prop doors open to prevent people from touching them.
 - Employees can stop customers at the door and hand the delivery out.
 - For food trucks and places with takeout only, there can be no seating, and crowds cannot be allowed to gather outside.
- If businesses want to have a special, they are to offer it all day long, not in a short window of time, to spread out the crowds.
- If they hold a larger event such as a food giveaway, it must be available by drive-thru only to avoid gathering.

Options for grocery stores:

- Limit customers and don't allow them to be in a line while waiting to open in the morning.
- Direct the flow of traffic inside.
- Make customers stay back while each one is checking out.
- Sanitize conveyor belts and card swipes between customers.
- Set times for specific ages.
- Set times alphabetically – family last name – for public access.

“If businesses feel they should be open and they are on the Governor’s list of nonessential businesses, then they should apply for a waiver to stay open,” Tobin said. “Once the waiver is obtained, it should be posted in the window of your business so customers and enforcement can clearly see it.”

Waivers and other information are available at <http://dced.pa.gov/resources>.

“I appreciate everyone’s cooperation during this very difficult time,” Dahlkemper said. “I encourage residents to take a walk staying six feet away from others. Stay connected through social media. Be creative with technology. This is all about saving lives in our community. Stay home so we can all get back to work soon.”

For any questions, call Erie County Department of Health at 814-451-6700.

###