Frequently Asked Questions for North Carolina's Stay At Home Order
March 27, 2020

On Friday, March 27, 2020 Governor Roy Cooper signed Executive Order 121, ordering North Carolinians to remain in their homes except for performing essential work and essential activities such as taking care of others, obtaining necessary supplies, and for health and safety purposes.

This Stay at Home Order will help slow the spread of COVID-19 and prevent the medical system from being overwhelmed by keeping individuals from being exposed to the virus and keeping those who have the virus from spreading it to others.

Below are frequently asked questions and answers. In addition, individuals should check with local governments to determine whether additional restrictions have been imposed in their local jurisdictions to limit the spread of COVID-19. Please note that Executive Order 121 modifies some sections of previous Executive Orders, but sections not modified are still in effect.

This information is subject to change in light of new CDC guidance and additional Executive Orders or local government declarations.

FAQs for Stay at Home Order

This Order permits the following businesses to remain open:

- Restaurants that provide take-out, drive-thru, or delivery
- Grocery stores
- ABC stores and beer and wine stores
- Doctors and other healthcare providers
- Pharmacies
- Hardware stores
- Post offices
- Office supply stores
- Gas stations and convenience stores
- Veterinarians and pet supply stores
- Hotels, airlines, buses, taxis, and rideshare services
- Places of worship

- Child care providers (that are following the required NCDHHS procedures)

For a full list of essential businesses, please see the Order.

What does "Stay at Home" mean?
It means people should stay at their residence and limit social interactions and travel for essential activities or essential business purposes.

When does the Order take effect?
The Order takes effect on Monday, March 30 at 5:00 PM.

When will this Order be lifted?
This Order is valid for 30 days through April 29, 2020 but can be revised or extended.

Is this Executive Order mandatory or is it just guidance?
This Order is mandatory. All persons and other entities are required to comply if they do not fall within the exemptions that are specified in the Order.

How will this Executive Order be enforced?
Governor Cooper is seeking voluntary cooperation from all state residents and businesses to ensure the health and safety of our communities. If voluntary cooperation is not achieved, state and local law enforcement officers have the authority to enforce the Order.

Various local counties and cities have issued their own shelter in place orders. How do the state and local orders correlate with one another?
People in North Carolina must abide by this statewide Order. To the extent that a local order contains more restrictive requirements, the more restrictive local Order must be followed.

Can I leave my home to visit friends or family members?
Individuals may leave their homes to care for a family member or friend, or to help their family member or friend get essential goods or receive necessary health care. Individuals should not visit with friends or family members if there is no urgent need.

What if I require medical attention?
Individuals may leave their homes to receive necessary medical care. If you have symptoms of COVID-19, please follow guidance (https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/public-health/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-response-north-carolina/what-covid-19) provided by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. If you have mild symptoms, stay home and call your doctor.

Can I leave my home to exercise?
People are encouraged to maintain healthy lifestyles, including outdoor recreational activity, such as walking pets and jogging. While exercising, individuals should maintain social distancing and continue to take protective measures to maintain their personal health and wellbeing.

Does this Order prohibit outside group exercise?
As long as the group abides by the mass gatherings provision in the Order (no more than 10 people) and maintains adequate social distancing, this activity is not prohibited, but it is strongly discouraged.

What if my home is not a safe environment?
Individuals whose residences are unsafe or become unsafe, such as victims of domestic violence, are permitted and urged to leave their home and stay at a safe alternate location, which can include a hotel or shelter.

Can I take my kids to the park?
Unless your local jurisdiction has closed parks, people may go to public parks and open outdoor recreation areas while following social distancing and mass gathering guidelines. Public playgrounds and their equipment are closed for use statewide.

Are the entertainment, personal care, and grooming businesses that are closed under Executive Order 120 supposed to remain closed?
Businesses prohibited from operating under Executive Order 120 shall remain closed.

What businesses may remain open?
Essential businesses as defined in the Order may remain open. Other non-essential businesses must remain closed unless permitted by the Secretary of Revenue.

Establishments required to close under previous executive orders must remain closed.

Does my business need any documentation to continue operating?
Businesses and not-for-profit organizations that are deemed essential as defined by the Order do not need any documentation from the State to continue operations. Employees are not required to have specific documentation to report to work under this Order.

What if my business is not listed as essential and I cannot conduct business operations and maintain social distancing between employees?
If your business is not included in the list of Essential Businesses and Operations and you believe it is essential, you can submit an application to the North Carolina Department of Revenue (NCDOR). NCDOR will review applications to determine whether the business is necessary to properly respond to this COVID-19 pandemic. NCDOR will post on its website a point of contact and procedures for businesses seeking an essential designation.

What if my business does not fall within an exception and must close?
Businesses that are required to cease all activities are still allowed to continue Minimum Basic Operations. These operations include activities necessary to maintain the value of the business's inventory; preserve the condition of the business's physical plant and equipment; ensure security; process payroll and employee benefits, or related functions; and, activities to support employees who are working remotely. However, employees must comply with social distancing requirements, to the extent possible, while carrying out such operations.

If my business was previously required to close under an Executive Order or a local Stay at Home order, are there any circumstances under this Order that would allow me to re-open?
No.

Does this Order prohibit operations of child care centers and other child care providers?
No. Although child care providers are urged to remain open for first responders and essential employees, they are also open to the general public. All open child care providers must follow the NCDHHS emergency child care operations and financing guidance.

Are religious functions allowed?
Religious gatherings are subject to the mass gathering ban and may not have more than 10 people. Participants should practice social distancing.

Are weddings allowed?
Weddings are subject to the mass gathering ban and may not have more than 10 people. Participants should practice social distancing.

Are funerals allowed?
Funerals are time-sensitive events and may not have more than 50 people. Participants should practice social distancing.

Can I still attend religious services?
The Order allows individuals to attend their places of worship if they follow the mass gathering ban and do not have more than 10 people assembled. Social distancing should be practiced. Places of worship are encouraged to stream their services online to accommodate people complying with the Order.

Are car dealerships open during the emergency?
Car dealerships, and other places that sell automobiles, are essential businesses that may provide relief for those who have transportation issues during the emergency and are permitted to remain open.

Can I still mail items and get deliveries?
Yes. The postal service and private mail and delivery services are essential businesses and will remain open.

Can I still go to my substance abuse treatment groups (e.g. Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous) or other group counseling sessions?
Group counseling sessions are subject to the mass gathering ban and may not have more than 10 people. Participants attending in person should practice social distancing. Group counseling services are urged to conduct meetings remotely if they are equipped to do so. Groups should make accommodations for remote support to the maximum extent feasible.

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 to obtain health care services and supplies. Do not visit a nursing home, skilled nursing facility, residential care facility or any other long term care facility unless it is an end-of-life visit.

Can I carry out a court-ordered visit with my kids?
Yes. To the extent possible, maintain social distancing with individuals other than your child and limit meetings to places and activities that are permitted under this Order, such as outdoor parks.

What if I still have to go to work?
Businesses have been encouraged to implement remote working policies for their employees. If you have been designated essential by your employer, you should continue to go to work and practice social distancing to the extent possible.

Where can I report a business that is operating in violation of the Order?
Governor Cooper is seeking voluntary cooperation from all state residents and businesses to ensure the health and safety of our communities. If voluntary cooperation is not achieved, state and local law enforcement officers have the authority to enforce the Order.

Are gun stores allowed to operate?
Gun stores implementing social distancing requirements for employees and customers as defined in the order may remain open.

Are golf courses allowed to stay open?
Golf courses implementing social distancing requirements for employees and customers as defined in the order may remain open.

What is the current number of people that can gather under the mass gathering requirements?
A mass gathering is defined as no more than ten (10) people.

What are social distancing requirements?
- Maintaining at least a six foot distance from other individuals;
- Washing hands using soap and water for at least twenty seconds as frequently as possible or the use of hand sanitizer;

- Regularly cleaning high-touch surfaces;
- Facilitating online or remote access by customers if possible.