PRESS RELEASE
March 12, 2020

LOCAL HEALTH EMERGENCY AND LOCAL EMERGENCY DECLARED ALONG WITH HEALTH OFFICER ORDER FOR SOCIAL DISTANCING IN SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

(SANTA BARBARA, Calif.) – There are no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Santa Barbara County at this time. In order to protect the health of our community, the Santa Barbara County Public Health Department has issued a declaration of a local health emergency and health officer order for the postponement and cancellation of events, as indicated below, as well as social distancing measures. The guidelines to be implemented are in direct alignment with California Department of Public Health’s most recent guidelines issued today regarding social distancing and public gatherings.

Following the public health declaration, the County proclaimed a local emergency, which is an essential step for local governments dealing with significant incidents. It ensures that all county resources are available to respond to COVID-19 in Santa Barbara County. Having the proclamation in place also helps facilitate state and federal reimbursement for emergency response.

- Large gatherings that include 250 people or more should be postponed or canceled.
  - This includes gatherings such as concerts, conferences, and professional, college, and school sporting events.

- Smaller gatherings held in venues that do not allow social distancing of six feet per person should be postponed or canceled.
  - This includes gatherings in crowded auditoriums, rooms or other venues.

- Gatherings of individuals who are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 should be limited to no more than 10 people.
  - This includes gatherings such as those at retirement facilities, assisted living facilities, developmental homes, and support groups for people with health conditions.

- A “gathering” is any event or convening that brings together people in a single room or single space at the same time, such as an auditorium, stadium, arena, large conference room, meeting hall, cafeteria, or any other indoor or outdoor space.

This applies to all non-essential professional, social, and community gatherings regardless of their sponsor. Gatherings that do not meet the aforementioned criteria should only be conducted when they are essential—that is, if the activity is essential and could not be postponed or achieved without gathering, meaning that some other means of communication could not be used to conduct the essential function.

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COUNTY DECLARES LOCAL HEALTH EMERGENCY, LOCAL EMERGENCY, HEALTH OFFICER ORDER
ADD 1-1-1

This guidance will remain in place at least through the month of March. As with all guidance that relates to COVID-19 response, authorities will revisit this guidance on a regular basis to evaluate the continued public health need for it and to evaluate if any elements need to be changed.

Social distancing is a practice recommended by public health officials to stop or slow down the spread of contagious diseases. It requires the creation of physical space between individuals who may spread certain infectious diseases. The key is to minimize the number of gatherings as much as possible and to achieve space between individuals when events or activities cannot be modified, postponed, or canceled.

The goal is to prevent people physically coming together unnecessarily, where people who have the infection can easily spread it to others. This guidance does not apply to activities such as attendance at regular school classes, work, or essential services.

Certain activities are essential to the functioning of our community and must continue. Hence, this does not apply to essential public transportation, airport travel, or shopping at a store or mall.

This does not apply to congregate living situations, including dormitories and homeless encampments.

For more information, please visit www.publichealthsbc.org or call the County’s COVID-19 call center at (833) 688-5513.

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