



Alameda County FAQs for Shelter in Place Order Effective on March 17, 2020

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Note: Updates to the FAQs may be issued periodically, with the most recent updates reflected in blue text.

To slow and decrease the spread of COVID-19, Alameda County joined Contra Costa, Marin, San Francisco, San Mateo, and Santa Clara counties and the City of Berkeley in issuing a legal order directing their respective residents to shelter at home for three weeks beginning March 17, 2020. The order limits activity, travel and business functions to only the most essential needs. Governor Newsom issued a similar statewide order on March 19, 2020. Both orders remain in effect in Alameda County, with the local order prevailing in areas where it is more restrictive than the order issued by the state.

General Questions

1. What do the State and Alameda County Orders do?

This Order requires that most people stay home unless they are engaged in certain “Essential Activities” which are discussed more below.

For most people, this means you and those you live with should remain at home. You may leave your home for specified reasons to make sure you have the necessities of life such as getting food and medical supplies.

You may go outside to take care of pets, go on a walk, and exercise outside, so long as you do not congregate in a group and maintain at least six feet of distance between you and other people.

If you are sick you should self-isolate, including, to the extent you can, from others you live with. Visit <http://www.acphd.org/> for information about COVID-19 symptoms and to learn how to protect yourself.

2. Who issued the State and Alameda County Orders?

This State Order was issued by Governor Gavin Newsom, while the Alameda County Health Officer issued our local order in a joint effort with Health Officers of Marin, San



Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Contra Costa, Solano, Sonoma, Napa, and the City of Berkeley. Those county health professionals have the authority under state law to issue Orders to protect the health and welfare of everyone in their respective jurisdictions.

3. How does the State Order interact with local orders to shelter in place? Does it supersede them?

The order issued by the Governor is a statewide order, and local orders may be more restrictive. Both orders remain in effect in Alameda County, and our local order prevailing where it is more restrictive.

4. Is this mandatory or is it just guidance?

Yes, it is mandatory. These Orders are a legal Order issued under the authority of California law. You are required to comply, and it is a crime (a misdemeanor with up to \$1,000 in fines or six months imprisonment) not to follow the Orders (although the intent is not for anyone to get into trouble).

It is critical for everyone to follow the Orders to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and protect themselves, their loved ones, friends, neighbors, and the whole community. All persons, businesses, and other entities are required to comply if they do not fall within the exemptions that are specified in the Orders.

5. Why are the Orders in place?

This Order is in place to address the ongoing spread of the virus that causes COVID-19 throughout the State and in the Bay Area. At this point in the global pandemic, the virus has a foothold in all the jurisdictions that issued the Bay Area Order. There is substantial community transmission of the virus, which is easily spread between people. One big challenge in controlling the transmission of the virus is that many people who have it don't have symptoms or have mild symptoms, and they can easily spread the virus even if they don't feel very bad. The virus lasts a long time on many surfaces (from hours to days).

Unfortunately, this virus can cause severe symptoms in some people and can be fatal. Some who get the virus, especially those over 60 years old, those who are immunosuppressed (have weak immune systems), and those with various medical conditions can end up with serious complications that include fever, pneumonia, and even in some instances death. There is no approved treatment or cure for COVID-19. That means that people who get very sick need medical intervention such as oxygen or help breathing.

Because the virus spreads so easily, without dramatic intervention like this Order, it would result in so many people needing medical attention in a hospital setting that our hospitals will be overwhelmed. We may not have enough beds or equipment to adequately care for the most seriously ill. And our health care workers and other first responders are also at risk, and if they get sick there are fewer people to provide health



care and first response services. For those reasons, it is critical that we now do everything in our power to slow down the spread of the virus. Doing so will help to “flatten the curve” to slow down the spread of the virus and help our health care system not be overwhelmed. If this succeeds, it means that there will be health care available for those who get sick with COVID-19 or who need emergency medical care for accidents, heart attacks, strokes, and other serious medical conditions.

We all have to do our part now to protect everyone in the community. The best way to do that is to “socially isolate” yourself at home to avoid further spread of the virus.

6. Why now?

The Bay Area Order was issued because the infection rates in the nine counties of the Bay Area and the City of Berkeley have escalated exponentially, and the situation will worsen quickly without rigorous intervention. This order is critical for helping to slow the spread of COVID-19 so our hospitals and health care systems do not become overwhelmed. The sooner these extreme measures are taken, the more effective they are because of how the virus spreads.

7. When does the State and local Order go into effect?

The Alameda County Order went into effect immediately after midnight, starting at 12:01 am, Tuesday, March 17, 2020.

[The State Order went into effect immediately on Thursday, March 19, 2020.](#)

8. How long does the Alameda County Order last?

The Order is currently set to last for three (3) weeks – until 11:59 p.m. on Tuesday, April 7, 2020. The duration may be either shortened or extended by the County Health Officer or the State Public Health Officer. We want to be sure the Order is in place for only as long as necessary, and the Health Officer will be closely monitoring the situation in order to determine whether adjustments make sense.

It will take at least 2 weeks to assess the initial impact of the order based on the incubation period of COVID-19 virus.

9. Am I allowed to leave my home while these Orders are in effect?

The intent of these Orders is to ensure that people remain in their residences and minimize social interactions outside of their immediate family unit. However, you may leave your residence for reasons specified in the Alameda County Order. These reasons include ensuring the health and safety of yourself and your family, engaging in outdoor activity that does not involve close contact with other people, obtaining services and supplies for yourself and your family, and to perform employment functions that are permissible under the Alameda County Order.



10. What happens if I don't comply with the Orders?

This is a legally enforceable order issued under California law. It is a crime to violate these Orders, and you may be punished by a fine or imprisonment for doing so.

11. For more information and updates:

Alameda Public Health Department website:

<http://www.acphd.org/2019-ncov.aspx>

California COVID-19 Response website:

<https://covid19.ca.gov/>

California Department of Public Health COVID-19 website:

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/nCOV2019.aspx>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention COVID-19 website:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

Alameda County/Bay Area Shelter in Place Order:

<http://www.acphd.org/media/559658/health-officer-order-shelter-in-place-20200316.pdf>

California Shelter in Place Order:

<https://covid19.ca.gov/img/N-33-20.pdf>

Vulnerable Populations

1. Who are the most vulnerable to COVID-19?

People who are over the age of 60, and those with underlying health issues—such as diabetes, lung disease, cancer, and compromised immune systems—are susceptible to serious illness from COVID-19. We urge these individuals to isolate at home and avoid or minimize essential activities outside the home.

2. How is Alameda County helping people experiencing homelessness?

The Health Care Services Agency holds regular calls with the homelessness provider community, offers ongoing guidance for shelter and outreach providers, and supplements hygiene efforts in encampments. The County is also working with state and



city partners to identify isolation and quarantine solutions for people who may become ill.

If you are homeless and have COVID-19 symptoms, call Alameda Health System 510-437-8500 for telephone screening and more information.

If you are looking for shelter, please call 211.

Shelter in Place & Social Distancing

1. What does it mean to “shelter in place?”

The term “shelter in place” means to stay in your home and not leave unless necessary for one of the designated exceptions listed in these Orders. You may leave your home to get food, to get a prescription, to see a doctor, to go to work if your work is essential as defined in these Orders, to take your child(ren) to and from childcare that is authorized under these Orders, and to help people you care for get the things they need to live and be healthy and safe.

2. What are the social distancing guidelines I still need to follow?

The best way to reduce their risk of getting sick, as with seasonal colds or the flu, still applies to prevent COVID-19:

- i. Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds as frequently as possible.
- ii. Stay home if you are sick.
- iii. Avoid touching your face.
- iv. Covering coughs or sneezes (into the sleeve or elbow, not hands)
- v. Avoid groups (stay at least six feet away from others)
- vi. Reduce the time you are around others outside the home, even when at least six feet away.

3. When practicing social distancing, how far should I stay away from others if I must be away from my home?

At least six feet, which is appropriately two to three steps away, including if you are on the bus or train.

4. What if I’m in a line and there isn’t six feet between me and others?

You should still try to maintain at least six feet between you and others. When that isn’t possible for short periods, do your best to maximize distance and keep the duration



short. And be sure when in line you don't sneeze or cough onto people. If needed, cough or sneeze into your shirt or into an elbow with clothing on.

5. What is the difference between “sheltering in place” and “social distancing”?

Sheltering in place is a more rigorous form of social distancing. There are some differences. Sheltering at home means:

- i. stay home
- ii. only go out for “essential activities,” to work for an “essential business,” or for “essential travel” as those terms are defined in the Order, and as discussed further below
- iii. stay 6 feet or more away from others
- iv. no gatherings

The other principles of social distancing and mitigative hygiene will continue to apply whenever feasible. These include washing hands, using hand sanitizer, disinfecting surfaces, not going out if sick, and staying at least six feet away from others.

Enforcement & Compliance

1. Who is enforcing the Order?

The Order has the force of law, and all persons, businesses, and other entities are required to comply. Enforcement decisions and processes rest with local law enforcement entities to enforce as appropriate within their jurisdictions. In unincorporated areas of the County, the Sheriff’s department enforces and in cities, it is police departments.

For enforcement questions, please contact COVID19compliance@acgov.org.

Health Care

1. What should I do if I’m sick? If I or a family member need immediate medical attention, can I leave home to go to the doctor or hospital?

If you are feeling sick, please first call your doctor, a nurse hotline, or an urgent care center before going to the hospital. Do not go to the emergency room of a hospital unless you are having an actual emergency. But you can and should seek medical advice if you or a family member is sick. If it is not an emergency, please contact your primary



care provider to determine next steps. Also, you can check online resources to help you assess symptoms if you are worried about whether you or a loved one has the COVID-19 virus. You should check <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html> for more information.

Call 911 or go to an emergency room only if you are experiencing a medical emergency. If you need to go to the hospital, call ahead so they can prepare for your arrival. If you need to call 911, tell the 911 operator the exact symptoms you are experiencing so the ambulance provider can prepare to treat you safely.

2. What if I need to get healthcare from my medical provider?

You can still get your health needs addressed. You should contact your health care provider to see if they are providing regular services. Some services, especially elective procedures, may be postponed or canceled. If you are feeling sick, please first call your doctor, a nurse hotline, or an urgent care center. Do not go to the emergency room of a hospital unless you are having an actual emergency.

3. What about routine, elective or non-urgent medical appointments?

Non-essential medical care like eye exams, teeth cleaning, and elective procedures should be postponed if possible. If possible, health care visits should be done remotely.

Contact your health care provider to see what services they are providing.

4. What if I need to get healthcare from my medical provider?

You can still get your health needs addressed. Health care providers should remain open to provide regular and urgent services. If you are feeling sick, please first call your doctor, a nurse hotline, or an urgent care center. Do not go to the emergency room of a hospital unless you are having an actual emergency.

5. Can I still go to my Mental Health appointments?

Yes, mental health appointments can continue. Patients should consult with their practitioners to determine whether it is appropriate and feasible to conduct individual mental health appointments remotely.

6. Can I still go to my substance abuse treatment groups (e.g. Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous) or other group counseling sessions?

All participants in group counseling services should attend meetings remotely if they are equipped to do so. Groups should make accommodations for remote support to the maximum extent feasible. If remote participation is not feasible or advisable under the circumstances, participation may occur in person provided that there is compliance with the social distancing requirements set forth in the Order, including maintaining at least 6 foot distance between individuals and capping group size to reduce in-person interactions.



7. What mental health resources are available for people experiencing distress?

The following resources are available to help people who may be experiencing distress or heightened anxiety right now:

- i. 24/7 Behavioral Health Services Department Call Center: (800) 491-9099
- ii. Crisis Text Line: Text RENEW to 741741
- iii. Crisis Support Services Suicide Prevention – (800) 309-2131
- iv. Crisis Support Services Text Line – text "safe" to 20121 between 4:00p.m. and 11:00 p.m. 7 days a week
- v. Nationwide Hotline – (800) 273-TALK or (800) 273-8255

If you are experiencing an emergency please call 911 immediately.

8. I'm a medical provider – am I allowed to remain open for non-essential services?

Yes, if you are a medical provider your office is encouraged to remain open. Under the Order, all medical services, including routine and preventive care, are considered essential. This includes, but is not limited to, mental health services, immunizations, well-woman exams, dental cleanings, allergy shots, eye exams, physical therapy, and surgeries. Many visits involve exams or procedures that must be done in person, but practitioners are encouraged to conduct appointments remotely via phone or telemedicine when it is appropriate and feasible to do so.

9. May I still go out to get my prescriptions?

Yes. You may leave your home to obtain prescriptions or get cannabis from a licensed cannabis retailer, so long as you practice social distancing.

10. Will this Order prevent companies working on vaccines and testing for COVID-19 from continuing to do that work?

No. The Order specifically exempts all healthcare related functions, including not just hospitals, clinics, and healthcare providers, but also all of the companies that supply them with goods and services.

Groceries & Medicine/Prescriptions & Basic Necessities

1. Should I stock up on food, necessities like toilet paper, and on medicines?

No. You will continue to be able to purchase these items whenever you need them, as stores selling necessary items like grocery stores, pharmacies, and hardware stores will remain open. Please continue to buy normal quantities of these items on the same schedule you normally do. This will ensure that there is enough for everyone.



2. Can I go to the store (grocery store, market, corner store, food bank, etc.) to buy food and other things?

Yes. This also includes medical supplies at a pharmacy, essential home maintenance supplies at a hardware store, or office supplies for your home business or work.

3. What if I can't get out of the home? How can I get supplies and food?

Please contact friends, family, or others you know who can provide support. They are permitted to pick up any of your needs. You can also order food and other supplies, and have it delivered to your home.

4. Can I get my prescriptions or other health care needs? Can I leave home to go to the pharmacy to get my prescription filled?

Yes. Drug stores, [licensed cannabis retailers](#), and other medical supply stores are allowed to operate. When possible you should have the drug store deliver your prescription medicine to your home, especially if you are elderly or have underlying medical conditions.

5. How will I get food and medicines I need if I must "shelter in place" in my home?

The Order specifically allows people to leave their home to buy food, purchase medicine, and purchase other necessary items. It also encourages businesses selling those items to remain open, and allows employees of those businesses to keep working.

6. Can grocery stores, farmers markets, and other food retailers remain open?

Yes. Grocery stores, certified farmers' markets, farm and produce stands, supermarkets, food banks, convenience stores, and similar food retail establishments are encouraged to remain open to provide food and pet supplies to the public.

When visiting these establishments, please help retailers maintain at least six feet minimum distance between patrons, including by providing ample space while shopping and waiting in line.

7. Can I go shopping for things other than food/groceries?

Yes. You can shop for anything that is related to health care, office supplies, and hardware supplies, and other necessary items. But you should minimize unnecessary trips, and maintain social distancing in the store.

8. Can big box stores that sell groceries and essentials stay open?

Yes.

9. Can I go to the bank?

Yes, you can go to the bank; but you should minimize unnecessary trips.

10. Can I go out to do laundry or have my laundry done?

Yes.



Restaurants & Meals

1. How can I access free or reduced-price meals for myself or my family?

Schools, soup kitchens, food banks, and other entities that provide free or reduced priced food goods or meals to students or other members of the public are encouraged to continue providing these services. However, food provided by these establishments to the public may not be eaten on the premises but must instead be delivered or taken away for consumption.

If you are in need of food, please call the Alameda County Community Food Bank's Emergency Food Helpline at 1-510-635-3663.

2. Can I go to a restaurant, café, coffee or tea shop, ice cream shop, or other foodservice location?

Yes, but only to pick up food. You cannot dine in or eat or drink at the facility. Patrons will not be permitted to dine or congregate in restaurants, bars, and similar establishments.

3. Is my favorite restaurant, café, coffee or tea shop, ice cream shop, or other foodservice location open?

Restaurants and other facilities that prepare and serve food to the public are encouraged to stay open, but only to provide delivery and carry out. Patrons will not be permitted to dine or congregate in restaurants, bars, and similar establishments.

4. I don't cook—how can I purchase meals

Restaurants, cafes, food trucks, and similar establishments may remain open to supply meals to the public via delivery and carryout. You can also purchase prepared foods at grocery stores, supermarkets, certified farmers' markets, convenience stores, and other such food retailers.

Transportation & Travel

1. Can I get a ride in my favorite ride share/on demand service or a taxi?

Yes, but only for essential travel. These services can only be used for "essential activities," to get to and from work to operate "essential businesses," or to provide "essential governmental functions," as those terms are defined in the Order. Also, being in close quarters in a vehicle that has been shared with many others should be avoided if possible. However, there may be circumstances when this mode of transportation is



needed. In that instance do your best to take social distancing precautions, being sure to cover your mouth and nose if you cough or sneeze, use hand sanitizer or wash your hands before and after rides, etc.

2. Can I take public transport (bus, subway, train)?

Yes, but public transit can only be used to perform “essential activities,” to get to and from work to operate “essential businesses,” or to maintain “essential governmental functions,” as those terms are defined in the Order.

When using public transport, you should maintain at least six (6) feet distance from one another, which is appropriately two to three steps away, including if you are on the bus or on trains.

3. Can bike repair shops/mobile bike repair continue to operate?

Yes. Bike repair is considered an essential business.

4. Am I allowed to leave the areas covered by this Order in order to travel to/from a job outside the Bay Area? Does the Order allow me to leave the County?

Yes, but only to perform “essential activities,” operate “essential businesses,” or to maintain “essential governmental functions,” as those terms are defined in the Order. Otherwise, the answer is no because that puts you and others in the community at risk.

5. I work for an essential infrastructure organization—can I leave home to go to work?

Yes. “Essential Infrastructure” includes, but is not limited to, public works construction, construction of housing (in particular affordable housing or housing for individuals experiencing homelessness), airport operations, water, sewer, gas, electrical, oil refining, roads and highways, public transportation, solid waste collection and removal, internet, and telecommunications systems (including the provision of essential global, national, and local infrastructure for computing services, business infrastructure, communications, and web-based services).

6. I work in healthcare operations—can I leave home to go to work?

Yes. “Healthcare Operations” including hospitals, clinics, dentists, pharmacies, pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies, other healthcare facilities, healthcare suppliers, home healthcare services providers, mental health providers, or any related and/or ancillary healthcare services. “Healthcare Operations” also includes veterinary care and all healthcare services provided to animals, but does not include fitness and exercise gyms and similar facilities.



Visiting or Returning to Alameda County

- 1. I am currently on vacation outside the County—Does the Order allow me to return home?**

Yes.

- 2. I'm visiting and staying in a hotel, with family/friends, or in a short-term rental. What should I do? Can I go home?**

Yes, you can leave the County for the purpose of returning home.

Caring for/Visiting Others

- 1. Can I leave home to care for my elderly parents or friends who require assistance to care for themselves? Or a friend or family member who has disabilities?**

Yes. Be sure that you protect them and yourself by following social distancing guidelines such as washing hands before and after, using hand sanitizer, maintaining at least 6 feet of distance when possible, and coughing or sneezing into a tissue and then washing your hands. If you have early signs of a cold, please stay away from your older loved ones.

- 2. Can I visit loved ones in the hospital, nursing home, skilled nursing facility, or other residential care facility?**

Generally no. There are limited exceptions such as if you are going to the hospital with a minor who is under 18 or someone who is developmentally disabled and needs assistance. For most other situations, the Order prohibits non-necessary visitation to these kinds of facilities except at the end-of-life.

If you need to know more, please contact the facility you want to visit by phone before you visit to inquire about the status of visits. This is difficult, but it is necessary in order to protect hospital staff, your loved ones and other patients.

- 3. Can I leave home to visit friends or family members if there is no urgent need?**

No. For your safety as well as their safety, we need to help each other fight the spread of COVID-19 by staying at home.



Schools & Childcare

1. Does this Order require that schools shut down?

This Order currently requires that all schools stop holding classes at physical locations within the County. In general, schools cannot be open for in-person instruction. In order to support distance or remote learning, and other school services, schools may allow their employees to come to work.

2. What if I work for a school?

Schools are subject to special requirements and restrictions, [so please review the Order for more details](#). Schools may allow their employees to come to work to support any continuing free and/or reduced price-meals and other essential services. Please [check with your local school districts](#) about the availability of such programs.

3. What if I work for a childcare facility?

According to the State Order, which is more restrictive than the Alameda County Order, daycares/childcare facilities are still open, but only for children of parents working in essential sectors. Daycare centers that remain open should employ heightened cleaning and distancing requirements. Babysitters may also come to the house to care for minors of parents working in essential sectors.

4. What do I do about my kids? I have to work.

If you work for an Essential Business, as described in the Order, you can and should continue to work. Certain employers, schools, and community organizations will be providing childcare/daycare for employees of essential businesses.

Home Repair, Housekeeping, Landscaping & Remodel

1. Can home service workers continue to provide their services?

Home service workers may provide services to residences if essential to health, safety, sanitation, or the necessary operation of the residence. Generally, this will mean that plumbing, maintenance (to, for example, fix an interior or exterior water leak), pest control, or similar services necessary to maintain a safe and sanitary household are permissible. Purely cosmetic and other non-essential home services should be deferred to minimize risk of transmission. Home based childcare is also allowed under the Order, within specific parameters.

2. What if my plumbing gets stopped up or there is another problem with necessary equipment at my home? How will I access those sorts of services?



Call your plumber or building manager. This Order allows service providers like plumbers, electricians, and exterminators to keep working and providing their services to the public. To obtain supplies for a DIY solution, you can also visit your hardware store, which is allowed to stay open under this Order.

3. Can my housekeeper continue to clean my home?

Yes. Remember to distance yourself at least six feet from your housekeeper. If you feel sick, do not ask your housekeeper to clean your home.

4. Can my landscaper continue to maintain my yard?

Landscaping services may continue only if they are necessary to protect the safety, sanitation, or operation of essential businesses, such as weed abatement and other fire prevention, tree trimming to prevent a dangerous condition, or clearance of irrigation infrastructure. Landscaping for cosmetic purposes may not continue.

If your landscaping needs are necessary to protect safety and sanitation, please distance yourself at least six feet from the landscaper.

5. I am midway through a remodel. Can my construction project continue?

Yes. Residential renovation projects of any kind that are currently underway may continue if necessary to a safe, sanitary, and functional home. Likewise, residential remodeling projects that are partly completed may continue if delaying completion would pose a safety, security, or sanitation risk to residents or impact the habitability of the residence.

6. I have a contractor scheduled to begin a remodel next week. Can I go ahead with this project?

You must defer your remodel or renovation project unless it is necessary to restore your home to a safe, sanitary, and habitable space.

Recreation, Entertainment, Social & Religious Activities

1. Can I leave home to go to my church, temple, synagogue, or mosque?

No. For your safety as well as the safety of your fellow worshippers, we need to help each other fight the spread of COVID-19 by staying at home. But places of worship can offer remote access to services, such as by emails, video streaming, or teleconference.

2. Can I leave home to exercise?

Yes, only if you will be both outdoors and not in close contact with other people. Fitness and exercise gyms are not permitted to operate.



3. I become anxious when cooped up in my house. Am I allowed to go to a park or on a hike? Can I travel to a County park or open space?

Yes. Spending time outside improves mood and well-being, and is particularly beneficial to children. You can go for walks, go to the park, and engage in other similar activities, but should maintain social distance (i.e. be more than six feet away from persons who are not part of your household) when on walks and in parks to avoid spread of the virus.

4. Are trails and parks allowed to stay open?

Yes, and you should maintain social distance when on your walks and in parks to avoid spread of the virus.

5. Can I go to a bar/nightclub/theater?

No. Entertainment venues like these are not permitted to be open during this Order.

6. Can I go to the gym or health club?

No. Gyms and health clubs are not permitted to operate under this Order.

7. Can I take my kids to the park and can we use playgrounds?

The Order allows you to engage in outdoor activities, provided that you maintain adequate social distancing. While we encourage use of parks, we strongly discourage the use of playgrounds because they include high-touch surfaces, and because it is typically not possible to maintain social distancing at playgrounds.

8. Can golf courses continue to operate?

No, but they are allowed to perform minimum basic operations (see [Order](#) for more information).

Mail & Package Deliveries

1. Can I still get my mail and deliveries?

Yes. You will still be able to get mail and other deliveries at your home.

2. Can I still order the things I need online and have them delivered to my residence?

Yes, the Order identifies businesses that deliver goods or services directly to residences as “essential businesses” that may continue to operate.



Pets

1. Can I walk my dog/pet?

Yes. Be sure that you distance yourself at least six feet from other persons.

2. Can I go to a vet or pet hospital if my pet is sick?

Yes. You can go to the vet or pet hospital if your pet is sick. Remember to distance yourself at least six feet from other pets and owners.

Please call first to determine if the vet has any restrictions in place.

Moving & Storage

1. Can I still move to my new residence during the Order?

Yes. You can move so long as you maintain social distancing.

2. Can I still access necessary items in my self-storage unit?

Self-storage facilities are not essential businesses but they can maintain minimum business operations and allow people to access their units to the extent they are accessing them for medical or related needs.

Funeral Services and Operations

1. Can the funeral and cemetery industry continue to operate?

Yes, and to provide the following functions: removal of bodies from the place of death, are and preparation of bodies, and interment of deceased persons.

2. Are funeral services and/or burial services allowed?

Funerals may proceed with the minimum number of attendees present. Not more than 15 people may attend a funeral. Funerals must be conducted in strict compliance with the social distancing requirements set forth in the Order.



Government and Non-Profit Organizations

1. Is the local government shutting down?

No, essential government functions will continue, including first responders, emergency management personnel, emergency dispatchers, and law enforcement. Other government functions or offices may be subject to reduced schedules or may be closed as part of the effort to fight the spread of COVID-19.

2. Are non-profit organizations allowed to continue operating?

If they provide essential services as described in the Order, then yes they can and should continue providing those services. This would include non-profits operating food pantries, providing housing for homeless residents, and many, many other critical services.

Essential Workers & Businesses (General Information)

1. Will all business offices and stores be required to close? What are “Essential Businesses”

No, “Essential Businesses” may stay open and their employees may leave home to go to work. The Order includes the following list of essential businesses (please see Section 10 of the [Order](#)):

- i. Healthcare Operations and Essential Infrastructure;
- ii. Grocery stores, certified farmers’ markets, farm and produce stands, supermarkets, food banks, convenience stores, and other establishments engaged in the retail sale of canned food, dry goods, fresh fruits and vegetables, pet supplies, fresh meats, fish, and poultry, and any other household consumer products (such as cleaning and personal care products). This includes stores that sell groceries and also sell other nongrocery products, and products necessary to maintaining the safety, sanitation, and essential operation of residences;
- iii. Food cultivation, including farming, livestock, and fishing;
- iv. Businesses that provide food, shelter, and social services, and other necessities of life for economically disadvantaged or otherwise needy individuals;
- v. Newspapers, television, radio, and other media services;
- vi. Gas stations and auto-supply, auto-repair, and related facilities;
- vii. Banks and related financial institutions;
- viii. Hardware stores;
- ix. Plumbers, electricians, exterminators, and other service providers who provide services that are necessary to maintaining the safety, sanitation,



- and essential operation of residences, Essential Activities, and Essential Businesses;
- x. Businesses providing mailing and shipping services, including post office boxes;
 - xi. Educational institutions—including public and private K-12 schools, colleges, and universities—for purposes of facilitating distance learning or performing essential functions, provided that social distancing of six-feet per person is maintained to the greatest extent possible;
 - xii. Laundromats, drycleaners, and laundry service providers;
 - xiii. Restaurants and other facilities that prepare and serve food, but only for delivery or carry out. Schools and other entities that typically provide free food services to students or members of the public may continue to do so under this Order on the condition that the food is provided to students or members of the public on a pick-up and take-away basis only. Schools and other entities that provide food services under this exemption shall not permit the food to be eaten at the site where it is provided, or at any other gathering site;
 - xiv. Businesses that supply products needed for people to work from home;
 - xv. Businesses that supply other essential businesses with the support or supplies necessary to operate;
 - xvi. Businesses that ship or deliver groceries, food, goods or services directly to residences;
 - xvii. Airlines, taxis, and other private transportation providers providing transportation services necessary for Essential Activities and other purposes expressly authorized in this Order;
 - xviii. Home-based care for seniors, adults, or children;
 - xix. Residential facilities and shelters for seniors, adults, and children;
 - xx. Professional services, such as legal or accounting services, when necessary to assist in compliance with legally mandated activities;
 - xxi. Childcare facilities providing services that enable employees exempted in this Order to work as permitted. To the extent possible, childcare facilities must operate under the following mandatory conditions:
 - 1. Childcare must be carried out in stable groups of 12 or fewer (“stable” means that the same 12 or fewer children are in the same group each day).
 - 2. Children shall not change from one group to another.
 - 3. If more than one group of children is cared for at one facility, each group shall be in a separate room. Groups shall not mix with each other.
 - 4. Childcare providers shall remain solely with one group of children.



2. Why is the County Public Health Officer issuing an Order that shuts down so many businesses in my community?

The Public Health Officers of the nine Bay Area counties and the City of Berkeley have been closely monitoring the rapidly accelerating situation with COVID-19 and it is clear that if we do not take very strong and aggressive action to slow down the spread of the disease, our hospitals and particularly our intensive care units will be overwhelmed with patients. We are taking this action to save the lives of people in our community, especially those who are particularly susceptible to severe illness from COVID-19, and are at heightened risk of severe illness or death if infected. The Order also protects everyone’s ability to seek emergency health care when needed by preventing health care facilities from becoming overwhelmed.

3. What is the impact on construction projects in Alameda County?

So long as social distancing practices are used during construction, a variety of projects are allowed. All public works and all residential construction projects that are partly completed can continue to completion. The Order prohibits new construction projects unless they are public works construction, or are adding to the supply of our County’s housing stock (i.e. building a second unit, a new home, an apartment building, etc.) or maintaining the habitability of homes in order to avoid displacement of residents. Commercial construction projects related to maintaining or upgrading essential business, government or health care infrastructure are also allowed to go forward. In either case, cosmetic improvements – such as repainting or refinishing surfaces that are otherwise safe – must not be done until the Health Officer has lifted the Order.

While the County Public Health Officer issued the Order, local building officials in towns and cities will be handling day-to-day implementation. The County will continue to update these frequently asked questions to respond to issues from cities, businesses, and individuals as they arise.

Essential Workers & Businesses (For Employers)

1. Essential Business Determinations:

Alameda County is not implementing a process to grant exemptions or make determinations on individual situations.

Each business or organization should make its own decision based on its interpretation of the Order, and should consult its own counsel about business decisions.



2. My business is considered an essential business, how do I prevent a COVID-19 outbreak at my business?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has developed interim guidance for businesses and employers to help them plan, prepare, and respond to COVID-19. Visit CDC's [website](#) for more information.

3. What if my business is not considered an Essential Business? Does this Order require that I shut down my business facility?

You and your employees are allowed to perform “Minimum Basic Operations” on site at your work place, so long as employees maintain a distance of six feet from one another to the greatest extent feasible. Minimum Basic Operations include:

- i. The minimum necessary activities to maintain the value of the business’s inventory, ensure security, or for related functions.
- ii. The minimum necessary activities to facilitate employees of the business being able to continue to work remotely from their residences.

Your employees can also work from home if their jobs are ones that can be performed remotely.

4. I operate a food facility-- what practices should I follow to keep my patrons safe?

Follow the best practices for allowable food facility operations included in the Alameda County Department of Environmental Health’s [“COVID-19 Guidance Document for Food Facilities”](#). This information is available in multiple languages, visit the Alameda County Department of Environmental Health’s [website](#) for more information.

5. Can warehouses and distribution centers that supply essential businesses that ship and deliver stay open?

Yes.

6. Can I continue to operate my moving company?

Yes. Moving companies are considered an essential business and are encouraged to stay open to help people move into their new residence and/or help move essential businesses that are necessary to maintain health/safety/and sanitation.

7. Can I operate a business that can or does sell things that can be delivered to people’s homes; can I continue doing that and shift more of my business to a delivery model?

Yes. Deliveries can continue to be sent to people’s homes, and you may adjust your business model accordingly while this Order is in place.

8. I’m a medical provider – am I allowed to remain open for non-essential services?

Yes, if you are a medical provider your office is encouraged to remain open. Under the Order, all medical services, including routine and preventive care, are considered essential. This includes, but is not limited to, mental health services, immunizations,



well-woman exams, dental cleanings, allergy shots, eye exams, physical therapy, and surgeries. Preventive care should not be deferred. Many visits involve exams or procedures that must be done in person, but practitioners are encouraged to conduct appointments remotely via phone or telemedicine when it is appropriate and feasible to do so.

9. Can medicinal and/or recreational cannabis businesses continue to operate?

Yes. According to [CalCannabis](#) cannabis is an essential medicine for many residents, and licensees may continue to operate at this time, as long as their operations comply with local rules and regulations, and social distancing can be maintained.

10. Can landscaping services continue to operate?

Landscaping services may continue only if they are necessary to protect the safety, sanitation, or operation of essential businesses, such as weed abatement and other fire prevention, tree trimming to prevent a dangerous condition, or clearance of irrigation infrastructure. Landscaping for cosmetic purposes may not continue. Landscapers performing services under contract with governmental agencies should consult the relevant agency to determine whether their services are deemed essential.

11. I run a construction company that builds affordable and market rate housing. Can we continue to build new units?

Yes. Creation of new housing units, including both market rate and affordable housing units, is essential. The Order allows construction projects to proceed and new ones to begin if they contribute new residential housing stock to meet the County's critical need for additional housing supply.

12. Can my supply chain business continue to operate?

Only essential infrastructure supply chains are permitted to operate.

13. Can recycling centers continue to operate?

Yes. Recycling centers are essential to helping maintain sanitation of residences.

14. Are janitorial/custodial and security staff essential workers?

Yes, depending on where these workers are employed, they may be essential to the workplace or to maintaining business operations. If the janitorial/custodial and security staff are working, please visit CDC's [website](#) for more business guidance.



Essential Workers & Businesses (For Employees)

1. What do I do if my employer requires me to go to work?

Many businesses are not permitted to operate under this Order. Essential Businesses, as defined in the Order, are allowed (and encouraged) to continue operating. If your work is not an Essential Business, you are not permitted to go to work and your employer is not permitted to require you to attend except to complete Minimum Basic Operations, as that term is defined in the Order. You may work from home if your work permits.

2. What if I want to go to work at a physical location in the County and I'm not sick?

Unless your work is exempted in the Order, you cannot go to work at a physical location in the County. You may work from home for any business if your employer allows it.

3. I work for the government—Can I continue to go to work?

Government employees can continue to go to work if they are designated as essential employees by their employer. Each government entity is responsible for determining which of its workers essential workers are.

4. I work for Apple, Google, or another large technology company that provides products and services that the public needs to access critical services. Is my company being completely shut down?

No. However, most employees of such companies will need to work from home. Anyone who must work onsite to maintain “Essential Infrastructure” for the community or to maintain “Minimum Necessary Operations” as described in the Order may continue to work in the workplace so long as they are maintaining social distancing.

5. I work for an essential infrastructure organization—can I leave home to go to work?

Yes. “Essential Infrastructure” includes, but is not limited to, public works construction, construction of housing (in particular affordable housing or housing for individuals experiencing homelessness), airport operations, water, sewer, gas, electrical, oil refining, roads and highways, public transportation, solid waste collection and removal, internet, and telecommunications systems (including the provision of essential global, national, and local infrastructure for computing services, business infrastructure, communications, and web-based services).

6. I work in healthcare operations—can I leave home to go to work?

Yes. “Healthcare Operations” including hospitals, clinics, dentists, pharmacies, pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies, other healthcare facilities, healthcare suppliers, home healthcare services providers, mental health providers, or any related and/or ancillary healthcare services. “Healthcare Operations” also includes veterinary



care and all healthcare services provided to animals, but does not include fitness and exercise gyms and similar facilities.