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Press Release**

Hillsboro, TX – The Department of State Health Services (DSHS) is still reporting the number of COVID-19 cases for Hill County as fifteen. However, a local source says a sixteenth case will be added to our count in the coming days. Demographic information on the new case is not yet available. Statewide numbers report 26,171 cases in Texas with 1,682 patients hospitalized, 690 fatalities and an estimated 11,786 individuals recovered. While case numbers continue to grow, it appears the pandemic has reached a point where the number of new cases and recoveries on a daily basis are fairly equalized. The situation appears to be in a stable phase which can be managed by the healthcare infrastructure in place, so Governor Abbott has issued executive orders allowing for certain parts of the economy to reopen under specific guidelines.

On Monday, Governor Abbott issued three new executive orders. These orders related to the safe reopening of certain services, maintaining hospital capacity for COVID-19 needs while allowing a variety of medical services to come back into service, and expanding travel without restrictions as part of the safe and strategic plan to Open Texas in response to the COVID-19 disaster.

“We are pleased for our local businesses that can reopen operations under the guidelines set forth by the Governor’s new orders, however, everyone needs to understand this does not mean the threat of being infected with this virus is gone,” said Hill County Judge Justin Lewis. “These orders simply mean the number of new cases and recoveries are stabilized and the spread of the Coronavirus is at a level that can be managed without overwhelming our healthcare infrastructure,” continued Lewis. “Whether we agree or disagree with the State’s decisions on how to move forward is irrelevant, because these executive orders have rescinded county and local officials’ authority to deviate from the directives in any meaningful way.”

Executive order GA-18 will allow restaurants with less than 51% of their sales receipts from alcohol, retail stores and theaters to reopen at 25% capacity in counties with more than five cases of COVID-19 confirmed. In addition, libraries and museums can also open at 25% occupancy. Outdoor sporting events with no more than four participants at a time, such as golf or tennis, may also resume per the directive. Churches and places of worship can conduct services per the updated guidelines provided by the governor and attorney general. Businesses with only one person in the office may also resume operations.

Per executive order GA-18 People shall avoid visiting bars, gyms, public swimming pools, interactive amusement venues such as bowling alleys and video arcades, massage establishments, tattoo studios, piercing studios, or cosmetology salons. The use of drive-thru, pickup, or delivery options for food and drinks remains allowed and highly encouraged throughout the limited duration of this executive order. In accordance with the guidelines from the President and the Center for Disease Control, visitation to nursing homes, long-term care facilities, state supported living centers and assisted living facilities is still not allowed.

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The second executive order issued yesterday was GA-19. It allows medical professionals and hospitals to resume offering some services previously halted if at least 15% of bed capacity remains open to provide care for COVID-19 patients as needed. To confirm services available through any health care provider, patients are still encouraged to call ahead prior to any scheduled appointments or procedures.

The final order issued was GA-20. It halted the restrictions on travel to Texas from Louisiana and New Orleans. Self-quarantine when entering Texas from Louisiana and New Orleans is no longer required unless someone is already in quarantine. In that instance, they must complete the 14-day quarantine before returning to normal travel practices. The order does require every person who enters the State of Texas as the final destination through an airport, from a point of origin or point of last departure in the following states and cities: California; Connecticut; New York; New Jersey; Washington; City of Atlanta, Georgia; City of Chicago, Illinois; City of Detroit, Michigan; or City of Miami, Florida to self-quarantine for a period of 14 days from the time of entry into Texas or the duration of the person's presence in Texas, whichever is shorter. This order to self-quarantine shall not apply to people traveling in connection with military service, emergency response, health response, or critical-infrastructure functions, as may be determined by the Texas Division of Emergency Management.

In addition to these executive orders, the Governor's Office also released a report, *Texans Helping Texans: The Governor's Report to Reopen Texas*. The report provides additional guidance on the status of the COVID-19 disaster in Texas, recommendations on how members of the most vulnerable populations can protect themselves from contracting the virus, and additional information on what businesses and services are allowed to resume at this time. To view the report in its entirety, visit <https://gov.texas.gov/uploads/files/organization/opentexas/OpenTexas-Report.pdf>.

"Throughout this ordeal, Hill County residents, businesses, religious organizations, government entities and essential service businesses and employees have done a tremendous job of voluntarily complying with health and safety guidelines put forth," said Hill County Judge Justin Lewis. "I firmly believe it is because of the actions of our people and organizations that we have not been hit even harder with the spread of Coronavirus," continued Lewis. "We are truly in this together, and I must continue to ask you to fight the good fight. Support our businesses as they reopen while continuing to protect your health and the safety and well-being of those around you. While this is not something anyone ever wants to experience, I am grateful to be in Hill County where we take care of our neighbors and look out for one another. Thank you for all you're doing," stated Lewis.

Residents should continue to take all precautions available to protect their households. If individuals or businesses need assistance during this time, please visit the website, www.raisinghill.com, for a listing of available resources in our area.

For the best information available on the spread of the Coronavirus across Texas, DSHS has a dashboard website available at <https://dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/>. People interested in monitoring updates from Hill County on the situation will find the most current information on the Hill County Emergency Management Facebook Page. The County will also provide regular updates to *KHBR 1560 AM Radio* and the *Hillsboro Reporter*.

In addition, the County has an emergency notification system. If you would like to receive phone call, text or email updates as warranted, you can register with the Hill County Emergency Notification System. Visit the Office of Emergency Management website at www.hilloem.com, scroll to the bottom of the home page and click on emergency alerts. Follow the prompts to set up your account.