



# Hays County News

## January 8, 2021

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Rising COVID-19 Hospitalizations to Trigger Capacity Limit Rollbacks under Governor's Orders

**Hays County Courthouse, San Marcos, TX** – New restrictions are set to take effect in Hays County as soon as Monday (1-11-21) following seven consecutive days of rising COVID-19 hospitalizations. As outlined in Governor Abbott's Executive Orders GA-31 and GA-32, bars must close, elective surgeries may need to be rescheduled, and many businesses must reduce their occupancy to 50 percent.

### What Is Executive Order GA-32?

Governor Abbott's Executive Order GA-32, which went into effect on October 14, 2020, states that when a Texas Trauma Service Area (TSA) has a high hospitalization rate, any business establishment that was operating at 75 percent occupancy limit must rollback to a 50 percent occupancy limit.

Hays County is in TSA Region O, which also includes Bastrop, Blanco, Burnet, Caldwell, Fayette, Hays, Lee, Llano, San Saba, Travis, and Williamson counties. Region O has experienced a steady increase in people hospitalized due to the COVID-19 virus.

"A high hospitalization rate is defined in the Order as seven consecutive days in which the number of COVID-19 hospitalized patients as a percentage of the total hospital capacity exceeds 15 percent," said Hays County Health Department Director Tammy Crumley.

Region O's hospitalization rate surpassed 15 percent on Sunday, January 3, 2021, and has increased since then. A rollback has not yet been mandated but is anticipated due to the increase in COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations. Hays County will further notify residents if the Texas Department of State Health Services issues a determination letter stating the region has become an area of high hospitalizations. This notice could be issued as early as Monday, Jan. 11, based on current hospitalization data.

## How does this impact local businesses?

- **Bars** - Bars that are not operating as a restaurant under Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission (TABC) rules must close. However, those businesses may continue to offer drive-thru, pickup, or delivery options for food and drinks to the extent authorized by TABC.
- **Other businesses** - Any business establishment that otherwise would have a 75% occupancy limit must operate at up to only 50%. This applies to retail establishments, restaurants, bars that are operating as restaurants, office buildings, manufacturers, museums, libraries, gyms, and fitness facilities and classes.
- **Surgeries** - Elective surgeries, as defined in State Executive Order GA-31, must reschedule unless they “would not deplete any hospital capacity needed to cope with the COVID-19 disaster.”

In addition, Governor Abbott’s GA-32 states that bars or similar establishments that are not restaurants cannot operate indoors on premises, but may offer drive-thru, pickup, or delivery options as authorized by the Texas Alcohol Beverage Commission (TABC). The occupancy limit applies only to indoor and not outdoor areas, events, or establishments, although social distancing and other safety protocols must be followed.

### The following activities/services are not impacted by these occupancy changes:

- Religious services
- Local government operations
- Childcare services
- Public or private schools
- Youth camps
- Adult or youth recreational sports
- Drive-in movies, concerts and similar events
- Person care/beauty establishments with at least six feet of social distancing between workstations (see full list in Governor Abbott’s Executive Order GA-32)
- Service listed by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security in its Guidance on the Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforce

All exemptions and information in Executive Order GA-32 can be found on Governor Abbott’s [website](#).

“Slowing the spread of this virus has never been more crucial for us as a community,” said Hays County Judge Ruben Becerra. “We all must consistently follow the personal protective measures we have been emphasizing throughout the course of this pandemic. The only way to reduce new cases and more hospitalizations is if we all take the safety recommended precautions. Stay home unless necessary, wear a mask, watch your distance around people outside your household, and wash your hands frequently.”

## How long will the rollback restrictions be in effect?

According to Governor Abbott's Executive Order GA-32, businesses that have been required to roll back to a 50 percent occupancy limit may return to 75 percent occupancy when the TSA hospitalization rate for COVID-19 returns to **below 15 percent for seven consecutive days**.

## Additional Resources/Information

- **COVID-19 Hotline** - Hays County residents can call a hotline for answers to their non-emergency COVID-19 questions. Operators are available in English and Spanish. The hotline number is **512-393-5525**. This hotline is for answers to health questions about COVID-19; safety practices, symptoms, quarantining, testing, etc.
- **COVID-19 Information for Hays County Residents** - Please visit our [COVID-19 web page](#) for additional information on resources/information.
- [Texas Department of State Health Services](#) - Information on Governor Abbott's Executive Order GA-32 and its impact on local counties.
- [Texas DSHS Hospitalization Dashboard](#) - The "Hospitals - Regional" tab shows daily hospitalization data for Texas Trauma Service Areas (TSAs). Hays County is located in in TSA O.
- Governor's Executive Order [GA-31](#)
- Governor's Executive Order [GA-32](#)

Additional information is available from the [Texas Department of State Health Services](#).

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