

Press Release

On July 2, 2020, Governor Abbott issued Executive Order GA-29 that amends other orders he has issued. In GA-29, Governor Abbott essentially mandates the use of face coverings by all Texans indoors or out whenever it is not feasible to maintain six feet of social distancing from a non-family member and when in groups of 10 or more.

Eleven exceptions to this order are listed. The last exception permits the County Judge to request an exemption from this order if they have 20 or fewer active cases.

As of July 5th, the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) reported that Callahan County had 19 confirmed cases, two fatalities, 10 recoveries, and 0 active cases. As of the same date, Taylor County had 494 confirmed cases, six fatalities, 302 recoveries, and 173 active cases. Other counties adjacent to Callahan County were also showing active cases.

Early in this pandemic, our jails and nursing homes closed to in-person visitation. Our churches began to hold virtual services. Our public buildings closed and began providing government services via email, telephone, or appointment. Our citizens began to practice social distancing, disinfecting, hand sanitizing, and, yes, wearing masks as recommended by the CDC. All of these actions, I believe, have contributed to the relatively low numbers recorded here.

Over the holiday weekend, I monitored our numbers as well as other counties numbers and watched as several counties adjacent to Callahan County opted out of the mask requirement. I studied the latest order and the exemptions, talked to our local health authority, and I considered whether or not I should request that Callahan County be exempted from the order.

I decided that I should not request that exemption and our local health authority agrees.

Many residents of Callahan County work and shop in Taylor County. Because the number of confirmed cases in Taylor County is approaching 500 and they have 173 active cases, the possibility that one of our residents may come in contact with an infected person is a real concern. They could then bring it back home.

The exemptions in the order are numerous. You don't have to wear a mask if you are under 10 years old or have a medical condition. You don't have to wear a mask if social distancing can be observed. You don't have to wear a mask if you are eating, voting, exercising outdoors, swimming, or driving alone or with your family. You don't have to wear a mask if you are worshipping (although it is encouraged), giving a speech, or engaging in business that requires facial identification, such as banking.

Please continue to practice the activities that have contributed to our low number of confirmed and active cases.