

Press Release – 12/17/2020

The Texas Department of State Health Services has reported an additional fatality from COVID-19 bringing our county total to 11 deaths. They reported that, as of December 16<sup>th</sup>, Callahan County has had a total of 293 confirmed cases. On November 19<sup>th</sup>, our case count was 189. As of the 16<sup>th</sup>, we have 26 active cases. This number represents both confirmed and probable cases.

As of December 16<sup>th</sup>, according to the DSHS web site, our 14-day new case total was at 39. On November 19<sup>th</sup>, it was 42. Our 14-day new case total has not been under 30 since November 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Today, DSHS reported that the percentage of hospital beds in the Abilene Trauma Service Area (TSA) utilized by COVID-19 patients has exceeded 15% for 15 days in a row. This means that bars that opened in October under GA-32 will need remain closed unless they meet the requirements set out by TABC for restaurants. Many other businesses, including dine-in restaurants, will continue to operate at the reduced their capacity (50%). Information specific to the impact this will have on businesses may be obtained at <https://www.tabc.texas.gov/coronavirus>.

There is a mechanism by which counties can be released from the bar closure and 50% capacity regulation and stay at 75% but the TSA percentage has to remain below 15% for seven days. The mask requirement, set in place by the governor's order, can be waived if the 14-day new case total remains below 30 for 14 days. As mentioned above, we have not been below 30 since November 2<sup>nd</sup> so we will not be permitted to opt out.

The vaccine is coming. It is hoped that it will be made available to nursing home residents and personnel in the county in the very near future. It may eventually be made available at other county locations. We will keep you informed.

The vaccine is not required. If you do not want to receive it, you will not have to.

Please remember to wear your masks, particularly when inside and when you are not able to maintain at least six feet distance from others. Continue to use good disinfectant practices and use hand sanitizer. Utilize the curbside, delivery, or drive-through options when possible.

As always, please remember all these victims and their families in your prayers.