



Understanding the
Santa Cruz County

PUBLIC HEALTH ORDER

Why is the County Public Health Office issuing an order that shuts down so many businesses in my community?

The Public Health Officers of the six largest counties in the bay area 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 the many higher-risk people in our community.



What are the employment functions that are permissible under this Order?

The Order identifies an extensive list of “essential businesses.” The employees of these businesses may continue to work outside of their residences so that the businesses may continue to offer their goods and services. Employees of non-essential businesses may report to work to maintain what the Order defines as “minimum basic operations,” which are the operations necessary to maintain the value of the business’s inventory, to provide for the business’s security. Additionally, government employees who are designated as essential by their government employer may continue to work outside their residence. Any employees who work outside their residence should maintain social distancing of six feet from any person whenever possible.



Does this Order require that I shutdown my business facility?

The Order identifies an extensive list of “essential businesses” that may continue to serve the public in person during the term of this Order. The Order allows non-essential businesses to maintain what the Order defines as “minimum basic operations,” which are the operations necessary to maintain the value of the business’s inventory, to provide for the business’s security, and to ensure that employees can effectively work from home.



Am I allowed to leave my home while this Order is in effect?

The intent of this Order 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 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 this Order.



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 groceries stores, pharmacies, and hardware stores will remain open. Please continue to buy normal quantities of these items on the same schedule you normally do.



How will I get food and medicine 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 directs businesses selling those items to remain open, and allows employees of those businesses to keep working and ensure those businesses are operating.



Can I continue to use public transit?

Public transit will continue to operate on a limited basis. Public transit can only be used to perform “essential activities” to get to and from work to operate “essential businesses,” or to maintain “essential government functions,” as those terms are defined in the Order.



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 is responsible for determining which of its workers are essential.



Does this Order require that schools shut down?

This order requires that all schools stop holding classes at physical locations within the County. However, schools may provide distance learning to their students. Employees of schools may go to work for the purpose of providing distance learning to their students. Schools can also continue to offer students free and reduced price lunches which many schools are doing.



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 six feet minimum distance between patrons, including by providing ample space while shopping and waiting in line.



Can I dine out?

NO. Restaurants and other facilities that prepare and serve food to the public are encouraged to stay open, but only to provide delivery and carryout. Patrons will not be permitted to dine or congregate in restaurants, bars, and similar establishments.



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, and other such food retailers.



I operate a food facility, what practices should I follow to keep my patrons safe?

Follow the best practices for allowable food facility operations. The National Restaurant Association has a great resource page. Consult the Public Health Department's Website for additional up to date information.



**I become anxious when
cooped up in my house.
Am I allowed to go to a park
or on a hike?**

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 distancing (i.e. be more than 6 feet away from persons who are not part of your household) when on walks and in parks to avoid spread of the virus.



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-profit operating food pantries, providing housing for homeless residents, and many other critical services.



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

NO. The Order specifically excludes 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.



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

YES. The Order identifies businesses that deliver their goods or services directly to residences as “essential businesses” that may continue to operate.



Does the Order allow me to leave the County?

The Order allows travel out of the County only to perform “essential activities,” operate “essential businesses,” or to maintain “essential government functions,” as those terms are defined in the Order.



What happens if I leave Santa Cruz County to go on a planned vacation?

The Order requires that you shelter in your place of residence. If you leave the County for vacation or another reason, that is not an essential purpose exempt under the Order, then you may not be permitted to return to your residence. Traveling runs the risk of spreading the virus to other areas and exposing new populations.

