

## Press Release

October 27, 2020

On October 26, 2020 the County Judge, Tom N. Keyes, received the following letter, addressed to the County Judge, from Dr. John Hellerstedt M.D., the Medical Director and a Commissioner of the Texas Department of State Health Services

“On Wednesday, October 7, 2020, Governor Abbott issued Executive Order GA-32, which supersedes GA-30. This letter is to notify you that your county no longer meets the threshold to open at the higher occupancy limits authorized under the Attestation process.”

“Under GA-32, DSHS continues to oversee an attestation process for counties with minimal cases to allow them to choose to operate at 75 percent capacity for certain businesses. This attestation process is an option for counties that have minimal cases and reside in trauma service areas (TSAs) with high hospitalizations.”

“A county may enter the attestation process if the county has fewer than 30 confirmed COVID-19 cases in the last 14 days, and the judge submits a certification to the Department of State Health Services.”

“Gaines County no longer meets the definition of a county with minimal COVID-19 laboratory confirmed cases. Because the county resides in a trauma service area defined as a high hospitalization area, the county may not reopen to the higher levels allowable under GA-32. Data on COVID-19 case reports and hospitalizations may be found through: [www.dshs.texas.gov/ga3031](http://www.dshs.texas.gov/ga3031).”

The County Judge attested that Gaines County was under 30 active cases as soon as Governor Abbott release Executive Order GA-30, on July 3<sup>rd</sup> Gaines County had 28 active cases, July 5<sup>th</sup> we had 30. The County has not been below 30 active cases since before the County Judge’s office began keeping a spreadsheet on August 3, 2020. Because our TSA (Lubbock region) hospitalization rate was under 15%, Gaines County was authorized to continue to allow restaurants to operate at 75% capacity, and for bars to be open. Now, however, Gaines County continues to have more than 30 active cases (as of Monday, October 26<sup>th</sup>, we have 125), and as of Sunday, October 25<sup>th</sup> our TSA has exceeded 15% hospitalization rate for more than 7 days. Consequently, Gaines County has lost our authority to allow restaurants to operate at 75% capacity. Bars must close.

The Gaines County Disaster Declaration is clear that Gaines County will follow the guidance of the State of Texas in response to this pandemic. It is unfortunate, but the following businesses must comply with these requirements, effective immediately.

1. Restaurants, retail stores, office buildings, manufacturing facilities, gyms and exercise facilities and classes, museums, and libraries are required to return to maximum 50% occupancy levels;
2. Bars (public and private clubs) must close
3. All licensed hospitals in the Trauma Service Area are required to discontinue elective surgery, as set forth in Executive Order GA-31.
4. Churches were not mentioned in GA-32, so they can continue to operate as they were.

This order from DSHS effects all counties in Trauma Service Area B (Lubbock area), except for those who are under 30 active cases of COVID-19. We will be able to return to 75% occupancy, and Bars opened, when Gaines County is under 30 cases for 14 days, or when TSA B is under 15% hospitalization rate for seven days.

We can all do our part to reduce these numbers. I know many of you think this ridiculous, it's a hoax; that it will go away after the election. Some of those thoughts may be right, but COVID-19 is real, it's not a hoax. Maybe it isn't as deadly as they first told us, but it is deadly for some. It may not be as contagious as they told us, but it is contagious. And the preventative measures may not be perfect, but they can reduce our risk of catching from others or transmitting to others. They've been demonstrated to be effective in practice for years in the healthcare community.

1. Wear a mask, especially when you can't socially distance from others.
2. Keep your hands away from your eyes, nose, or mouth unless you have sanitized your hands first.
3. Wash with soap and water for 20 seconds frequently, or sanitize with alcohol based lotion or liquid, especially after touching frequently handled items (like door handles, hand rails, etc.).
4. Try to maintain 6 feet of social distancing from anyone who is not from your household.
5. Senior citizens with underlying conditions like emphysema, COPD, diabetes, high blood pressure, should avoid large social gatherings. Have someone shop for them so they can stay out of crowded areas.

Additional information: Counties included in Trauma Service Area B

• Bailey	• Borden	• Castro
• Cochran	• Cottle	• Crosby
• Dawson	• Dickens	• Floyd
• Gaines	• Garza	• Hale
• Hockley	• Kent	• King
• Lamb	• Lubbock	• Lynn
• Motley	• Scurry	• Terry
	• Yoakum	