

March 25, 2020

UPDATE 3/25/2020 News Release from Wilson County Office of Mayor Randall Hutto
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Wilson County Declaration for COVID-19

Wilson County Declares State of Emergency

On Monday, March 23, 2020 at 12:00 p.m., Wilson County, TN Mayor Randall Hutto declared a State of Emergency pursuant to the statutes of the state of Tennessee TCA 58-2-11 0(3)(A)(V) which grants the County Mayor certain powers to take prudent action which facilitate the response to COVID-19 to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of our residents.

Mayor Hutto convened the Wilson County Board of Health, the Director of WEMA, the Chief of EMS, the CEO of Vanderbilt Wilson County Hospital, TEMA, the Director of Wilson County Health Department, and Tennessee Department of Health representatives on March 17th. They met again on March 23rd with city mayors of Mt. Juliet, Lebanon, and Watertown and the manager of Mt. Juliet on the situation and response to COVID-19. The team determined the best direction was to consistently follow the State of Tennessee Executive Order No. 17 signed by Governor Lee on March 22, 2020 which was issued “to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 by limiting social gatherings, dine-in service, and gym use, and exposure at nursing and retirement homes, and providing flexibility for restaurants regarding the sale of alcohol.”

Governor Lee’s Executive Order No. 17

1. In accordance with the provisions of the State of Tennessee Executive Order #17 by the honorable Governor Bill Lee, and with guidance from the CDC to limit the spread of COVID-19:
 - a. Persons in Wilson County shall not participate in social gatherings of ten (10) or more people. **Provision adapted for Wilson County from TN Executive Order #17.**
 - b. Persons in Wilson County shall not eat or drink onsite at restaurants, bars, or other similar food or drink establishments, and shall not visit gyms, or fitness/exercise centers or substantially similar facilities. **Provision adapted for Wilson County from TN Executive Order #17.**
 - c. Restaurants, bars, and similar food or drink establishments, including nightclubs, shall not be open to persons, except only to offer drive-through, pickup, carry-out, or delivery service for food or drink, and persons are highly encouraged to use such options to support such businesses during this emergency. **Provision taken from TN Executive Order #17.**
 - d. Gyms or fitness/exercise centers or substantially similar facilities shall not be open to members or the public, although persons are highly encouraged to use any available electronic or virtual fitness options to support such businesses during this emergency. **Provision taken from TN Executive Order #17.**
 - e. Persons in Wilson County shall not visit nursing homes, retirement homes, or long-term care or assisted-living facilities, unless to provide essential assistance or to visit residents receiving imminent end-of-life care, provided such visits may be accomplished without

unreasonable risk to other residents. Persons are highly encouraged to use available electronic or virtual communication to spend time with their family members, friends, loved ones, and other persons in those facilities. **Provision adapted for Wilson County from TN Executive Order #17.**

- f. Persons and businesses should take particular care to protect the well-being of those populations especially vulnerable to COVID-19, including older adults and persons with compromised immune systems or serious chronic medical conditions, by, among other things, taking care to adhere to all precautions advised by the CDC and refraining from physical contact and association, to the extent that it is practical. Businesses should further consider implementing measures to protect our most vulnerable populations by, for example, offering delivery service or special opportunities for them to shop in retail establishments (at times) exclusive of the general population. **Provision adapted for Wilson County from TN Executive Order #17.**
2. This does not mandate sheltering in place and does not prohibit persons in Wilson County from visiting places necessary to maintain health and economic well-being, including grocery stores, gas stations, parks, and banks, among other places, so long as they observe the necessary precautions advised by the CDC to reduce the spread of COVID-19. **Provision adapted for Wilson County from TN Executive Order #17.**
3. All critical infrastructure remains operational, and government entities and businesses will continue providing important and essential services. **Provision taken from TN Executive Order #17.**
4. For offices, workplaces, and businesses that remain open, employees should work from home where feasible, and employees and their customers should practice good hygiene and observe the necessary precautions advised by the CDC to reduce the spread of COVID-19. **Provision adapted for Wilson County from TN Executive Order #17.**
5. Any local law, order, rule, or regulation inconsistent with this declaration is hereby suspended. **Provision adapted for Wilson County from TN Executive Order #17.**

Additional Actions Taken by Wilson County Government

Wilson County Courthouse closed to the public.

Wilson County Government offices continue to be staffed for essential services to county residents. Regular posted hours of operation apply. However, public access is limited to services by phone, internet, drop-boxes, or appointments on an exception basis. CDC guidelines are in effect for social distancing, cleanliness and disinfecting. Our Director of Operations, Robert Baines has posted cleaning instructions which are being done in every office.

These offices are closed to the public:

Direct access phone numbers are provided here for departments frequently accessed by the public. Additional contact information is available at <https://www.wilsoncountyttn.gov> .

Mayor Hutto's Office, 615-444-1383	County Clerk, 615-444-0314
Trustee, 615-444-0894	Veteran's Affairs, 615-444-2460
Finance, 615-443-2630	Human Resources, 615-466-5138
Planning, 615-449-2836	Building Codes, 615-444-3025
Register of Deeds, 615-443-2611	Property Assessor, 615-444-8661
Groundwater, 615-443-2784	Stormwater, 615-443-2120
Archives, 615-443-1993	Health Department, 615-444-5325
WEMA, 615-449-0256	Landfill, 615-449-6684

Additional closures in the county include:

- Libraries
- Schools including Wilson County Schools and Central Offices, Lebanon Special School District, and private schools
- Courts per Supreme Court Order, except limited courts and visitors for essential cases per the order
- Wilson County Expo Center
- James E. Ward Ag Center
- Convention and Visitor's Bureau
- Hospital and nursing homes, "No Visitor Policy" but open for patients and staff
- Veteran's Museum

A Message from Mayor Hutto

Dear Friends,

This is an unsettling time for our country and our community, as we are in a public health emergency due to the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). Your elected leaders and public health officials are working around the clock to slow the spread of the virus and provide care to those who need it. It is important to remember that we need to be prepared, not scared. Heed the advice of public health experts who agree that the most effective way to “flatten the curve”, or slow the spread of the virus, is to practice social distancing. Below is some helpful information regarding COVID-19:

How can you be infected?

- Coronavirus can spread from person to person through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Because these droplets can travel up to six feet, public health experts advise maintaining six feet of distance from others.
- The virus can also remain on a surface or object and enter the body through the mouth, nose, or eyes. Therefore, it is important to wash your hands before touching your face.

How long does it take to show symptoms after being infected?

- It takes 2 to 14 days to develop symptoms after exposure to the virus. The average is about 5 days.

What are the symptoms?

- Fever
- Dry cough
- Shortness of breath

When should you seek testing?

- Per Vanderbilt and the Wilson County Health Department, call your healthcare provider or you can call the following hotlines:
 - Vanderbilt Hotline, (888)-312.0847, 7 days a week, 7am-10pm
 - Tennessee’s COVID-19 Public Information Hotline, (833)556.2476 or (877)857.2945, 7 days a week, 10am-10pm
- Please consider if you do not have symptoms and would not ordinarily see your doctor based on how you feel now, you do not need evaluation or testing for COVID-19.

Except in the case of an emergency, please call your healthcare provider before seeking treatment in person.

While it is normal to feel anxious, there are ways to take control of the situation and **be prepared**. I urge you to take the following precautions to keep yourself and our community safe.

What is the difference between “Safer at Home” and “social distancing”?

Safer at Home is a stricter form of social distancing. There are some differences. Safer at Home means:

- Stay home (stay unexposed and do not expose others)
- Only go out for essential services
- Stay six feet or more away from others
- Don't gather in groups

It is important during this national emergency that we unite as a community, follow the advice of experts, and take responsibility for our actions to slow the spread of coronavirus.

It is important to note that each entity within county government is in its own jurisdiction. This is why you will see cities and counties declaring a state of emergency. The county's jurisdiction does not supersede the cities. The powers of the county Mayor in a state of emergency are limited to evacuation of the unincorporated areas of the county or suspending procedures and processes pertaining to the procurement and contracting for the continued provision of government and emergency services. The County Mayor is also responsible for county buildings, except the jail, courthouse and landfill. Outside of these specific areas, the County Mayor does not possess the authority to close or restrict private business or the movement of the citizens of Wilson County, TN.

As the Mayor, I support the actions of the Governor of Tennessee and Mayors of the cities of Wilson County in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic.

Concerning everything you have read or heard on COVID-19, if you have a treadmill and don't use it, it is of no value to you. The same is true with this information. We ask that everyone act responsibly in their daily life to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. We must all pay attention and be aware of our surroundings. Our children, parents, grandparents and other loved ones are counting on us. Please show that you care about yourself and others by complying with their requests.

We will continue to monitor our situation and look for better ways to help stop the spread of COVID-19. The situation changes daily, and we will have to as well. This situation has our full attention and we ask that it has yours as well.

Make the most of your time at home with family. Tell stories about your past to carry along history. Teach your children how to cook, clean, check the oil on a car or gauge tire pressure, write a check, balance a check book, make out a budget, address an envelope, write a thank you note or letter, plant something like a flower or a tomato or spring starts, thread a needle and sew something, clean out a closet, and give away things to the Community Help Center or Haven House. There are so many life lessons that can be taught at home that we are normally too busy to teach. Take this opportunity and make the best of it.

Let's work together for a safe and healthy community.

Sincerely,

Randall Hutto
Wilson County Mayor

Message from Tim Diffenderfer, Director of the Wilson County Health Department

The Wilson County Health Department is working in partnership with other local, regional and state officials to implement prevention and mitigation strategies for local communities based on guidance provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and by state leadership. Wilson County has a local preparedness plan for pandemics that is practiced at least once a year, and this plan is the basis for the county's response to COVID-19. Local leaders are empowered to make decisions based on the needs of the residents of Wilson County and are doing so.

"We're working to ensure that everyone in Wilson County that has a clinical picture consistent with COVID-19 can be tested," said Wilson County Health Department Director Tim Diffenderfer. "We need all Wilson County residents to join the effort to prevent further spread of this illness in our communities."

It is important to note the testing process for COVID-19 is not like that of something like a rapid flu test, with results provided on the spot. Testing for COVID-19 is conducted in the laboratory, so tests themselves are not distributed to health care facilities. Rather, health care providers take samples from their patients and submit them to a laboratory for testing."

Many health care providers can assess patients for COVID-19 and collect samples to submit for testing. People who have concerns about their health should contact their regular health care providers, who can assess their risk and determine if they should be tested. People who don't have insurance and have concerns they may have symptoms of COVID-19 can contact the Wilson County Health Department for consultation and to talk through potential options for assessment.

Most people, particularly those with mild or no symptoms, do not need assessment for COVID-19. Public health authorities are prioritizing testing of people in high-risk categories: contacts of confirmed cases; people in occupations with exposure to large numbers of contacts; health care workers; nursing home residents; severely immunocompromised patients; critically ill patients; pregnant women and people who have traveled to areas with high case counts.

Anyone concerned about their health should first contact their regular health care provider. If you feel you need treatment, call the health care provider or facility first, so they can arrange for your arrival if you need to come in and can accommodate you while reducing risk of exposing other people to illness.

There are lots of things everyone in Wilson County can do to help flatten the curve and reduce the impact of COVID-19:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water (or alcohol-based hand rub) for at least 20 seconds, especially after coughing or sneezing
- Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands
- Stay home when you are sick
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with your arm or a tissue
- Clean and disinfect objects (e.g., cell phone, computer) and high touch surfaces regularly

Some people are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness, including older adults and people who have serious chronic medical conditions such as heart disease, diabetes or lung disease. It's extra important for people in these groups to take actions to reduce their risk of getting sick with COVID-19:

- Take everyday precautions to keep space between yourself and others
- When you go out in public, keep away from others who are sick, limit close contact and wash your hands often
- Avoid crowds as much as possible
- Avoid cruise travel and non-essential air travel
- During a COVID-19 outbreak in your community, stay home as much as possible to further reduce your risk of being exposed

For a list of assessment sites, please visit <https://www.tn.gov/health/cedep/ncov/remote-assessment-sites.html>.

For additional information, please visit www.tn.gov/governor/covid-19.html, www.tn.gov/health/cedep/ncov.html and www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html.

FAQ from Wilson County Health Department

Clarification of Assessment vs. Testing

When you call your primary care physician or the Wilson County Health Department, you will first be evaluated to determine whether an in-person assessment is needed and if testing should be done. Most people do not need a test, particularly those with no symptoms. Remember to call before you go!

If testing is determined to be necessary, a specimen is collected and sent to a lab, where it will take several days for results. Once the lab gets the results, lab staff members will contact the medical provider who collected the specimen and give him or her those results. The medical provider will then contact the patient and tell him or her the results. The medical provider will also notify the local health department as is required with this and all reportable communicable diseases.

If it has been determined that you need a test, you will be quarantined until the test results are received. If the test shows positive results, quarantine will continue, along with detailed instructions from your health care provider and the health department. The health department will also start a contact investigation of people you had close contact with during the infectious period.

Since this is a novel or new virus, the public health response and guidance will constantly evolve during this situation.

Explaining Increase in Numbers

An increase in numbers is expected, as private laboratories and private providers have increased their capacity to test. Typically, the process goes like this: The doctor gets lab results from the lab, which takes several days. The doctor notifies the patient first, and then either electronically or by phone will notify public health officials. This is the normal process for all communicable diseases.

This recent increase in numbers was expected and will continue to increase. We can do our part to flatten the curve by following social distancing and staying home when you are sick. We will still follow the public health guidance at this time by quarantining the family of people with a positive result and talking with individuals who had close contact to a patient during his or her infectious period.

Patients Privacy Rights and Communicable Disease

Because of patient privacy rights that we are required to protect, we won't be able to discuss where cases are or where they worked. However, all close contacts during the infectious period of each positive case will be directly contacted by the health department. Please know that if you have come into close contact with a case the health department will be in touch with you and they will protect your privacy as well.

Where Do I Get Answers for My Questions?

People who have concerns about their health should first call their regular health care providers. For Wilson County residents who have questions, please call your local health department Monday –Friday 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m. at 615-444-5325. Also, the state hotline number is available daily seven days a week from 10:00 a.m. – 10:00 p.m. at 833-556-2476 or 877-857-2945.

What Can the Public Do at this Time?

Follow public health guidance: Social distancing, stay home if you are sick, and practice good hand and cough/sneeze hygiene.

What Do I Do if I Am Sick?

Stay home. People who are mildly ill with COVID-19 can recover at home. Do not leave except to get medical care and do not visit public areas. Talk with your doctor on how to treat mild illness at home.

Stay in touch with your doctor; call before you get medical care. Be sure to get care if you feel worse or you think it is an emergency.

Avoid public transportation like ride share, taxis or buses.

Stay away from other family members as much as possible. Designate a specific sick bathroom and bedroom when possible in your home.

Message from Jay Hinesley, President, Vanderbilt Wilson County Hospital

We are continuing to monitor the COVID-19 pandemic and the potential impact on our community. We have taken multiple actions to protect our patients and staff and will continue to develop plans to care for our community as the situation advances. We have gone to a "No Visitor Policy" in our inpatient areas (including McFarland Campus) and Emergency Department. Please check our website www.VanderbiltWilsonCountyHospital.com for full details.

Adequate supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE) are front-of-mind for all U.S. hospitals and health systems right now due to uncertainties with manufacturers and the global supply chain. Our Supply Chain professionals began preparing for the pandemic in January and we have adequate supplies of PPE on hand. However, because we don't know how long or how widespread the pandemic may be, we are encouraging our staff to use supplies judiciously.

We as a community need to take every step now to slow the spread of the virus. By following the order, we can reduce the number of people who need hospitalization all at once. If you have symptoms (cough that started in the past 7 days and shortness of breath, with or without fever) call your healthcare provider or you can call the following hotlines:

- Vanderbilt Hotline, (888)-312.0847, 7 days a week, 7am-10pm
- Tennessee's COVID-19 Public Information Hotline, (833)556.2476 or (877)857.2945, 7 days a week, 10am-10pm

Please consider if you do not have symptoms and would not ordinarily see your doctor based on how you feel now, you do not need evaluation or testing for COVID-19.

Message from Joey C. Cooper, Director Chief, WEMA

COVID-19 has produced a “State of Emergency” in Wilson County which has affected the health and welfare of the citizens and caused impacts to life and property of this community. In the interest of public safety and welfare, the County Mayor signed a pandemic proclamation pursuant to the statutes of the State of Tennessee TCA 58-2-110 that a state of emergency exists as of Monday, March 23, 2020 at 12pm. Plans have been placed into effect to coordinate and facilitate an effective response to and recovery from this emergency situation.

Each county emergency management agency shall perform emergency management functions within the territorial limits of the county within which it is organized and, in addition, shall conduct such activities outside its territorial limits of the county within which it is organized as are required pursuant to this chapter and in accordance with state and county emergency management plans and mutual aid agreements. A county shall:

- Serve as liaison for and coordinate the requests of municipalities located within such county for state and federal assistance during post-disaster emergency operations.
- Appropriate and expend funds; make contracts; obtain and distribute equipment, materials, and supplies for emergency management purposes; provide for the health and safety of persons and property, including emergency assistance to the victims of any emergency; and direct and coordinate the development of emergency management plans and programs in accordance with the policies and plans set by the federal and state emergency management agencies.
- Appoint, employ, remove, or provide, with or without compensation, coordinators, rescue teams, fire and police personnel, and other emergency management workers.
- Establish, as necessary, a primary and one (1) or more secondary emergency operating centers to provide continuity of government and direction and control of emergency operations.
- Assign and make available for duty the offices and agencies of the political subdivision, including the employees, property, or equipment thereof relating to firefighting, engineering, rescue, health, medical and related services, police, transportation, construction, and similar items or services for emergency operation purposes, as the primary emergency management forces of the political subdivision for employment within or outside the political limits of the subdivision.
- Request state assistance or invoke emergency-related mutual-aid assistance by declaring a state of local emergency in the event of an emergency affecting only one (1) political subdivision. The duration of each state of emergency declared locally is limited to seven (7) days; it may be extended, as necessary, in seven-day increments.

Further, the political subdivision has the power and authority to waive the procedures and formalities otherwise required of the political subdivision by law pertaining to:

Performance of public work and taking whatever prudent action is necessary to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of the community; Entering into contracts; Incurring obligations; Employment of permanent and temporary workers; Utilization of volunteer workers; Rental of equipment; Acquisition and distribution, with or without compensation, of supplies, materials, and facilities; and Appropriation and expenditure of public funds.

The Wilson County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is currently activated at Level 3 – Partial Operations, with some positions working virtually. We have put into place Emergency Protective

Measures based on information provided by local and state leaders. We are currently working with the Wilson County Health Department, Tennessee Department of Health, Vanderbilt Wilson County, local businesses, and elected officials on sharing and providing the latest information available concerning COVID-19 to improve our response to and recovery from this pandemic.

For more information go to: www.wilsoncountyttn.gov website; www.wilsonema.com website; www.tn.gov/health website; www.cdc.gov website.

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