COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions:

**Updated April 20, 2020**

Below are frequently asked questions about the City of Wilmington’s Order as well as the Governor’s state-wide Stay at Home Order. The New Hanover County order can be found here.

Additional information about City related information and closures.

Additional FAQ’s compiled by New Hanover County can be found here.

Guidance to Drive-Thru and Curbside Operations by New Hanover County Health Department can be found here. For Spanish, click here.

Additional FAQ’s compiled by the Governor’s Office can be found here.

**Disclaimer: This is a rapidly changing situation, and the answers to these questions may change daily, so please make sure to keep checking back regularly as we update answers to your questions.**

**This document is only updated as questions that have not already been addressed are received. If the date at the top of the page is more than one business day old, there have not been any new questions since that date.**

Click on the topics below to view frequently asked questions in each category.

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ARE THESE BUSINESSES ALLOWED TO STAY OPEN?

Q: Are house cleaning services considered essential and allowed to operate, including in homes? (Posted April 14, 2020)
A: Cleaning services are considered essential under both the state and local orders because they relate to health and hygiene. Employees are encouraged to maintain social distancing between themselves and with customers while in a home or at a business. If they are not able to maintain social distancing while they are working, then they are encouraged to wear personal protective items like gloves and cloth masks while they are working.

Q: Are real estate businesses allowed to stay open, including showing houses? (Posted April 3, 2020)
A: Real estate has been determined to be essential to the need of finding shelter, so real estate practices are allowed to continue, but all realtors are encouraged to move their businesses to online platforms, to the fullest extent practicable. For instance, while in-person house showings are allowed, it would be more in line with social distancing requirements to employ virtual home tours and show clients pictures of properties instead of traveling out to a host of properties to see them in person.

Q: Are martial arts and other similar facilities that normally provide after-school childcare, and now provide either part-time or full-time childcare allowed to remain open to the public, even if they are not a licensed childcare facility? (Posted April 3, 2020)
A: Childcare, whether from licensed centers, church providers, daycares, after-care providers, home-based care, or any other source, is considered to be an essential service. As a result, a business that provides martial arts classes or other similar classes (dance, swimming, etc.) for children would be allowed to remain open for the purpose of providing care during the day and early evening for children. However, classes for adults are non-essential recreation businesses and are not allowed. Additionally, social distancing must be practiced to the fullest extent practicable.

Q: Are dry cleaners considered essential services? (Posted April 2, 2020)
A: Essential services can be either direct or indirect. Dry cleaners are considered to be essential services because they support people who are performing essential services and working for essential businesses, so they are allowed to continue operation under both the state and local orders. Social distancing with customers and between staff is strongly encouraged.

Q: Is it legal for companies to be conducting door to door sales while we are under a stay at home order? (Posted April 2, 2020)
A: No. Door to door sales of any kind do not fall under any exception in either the state or local orders and must cease.

Q: Are storage centers within the City of Wilmington allowed to remain open? (Posted April 2, 2020)
A: Yes, they are. These storage facilities are seen as an extension of the home for many apartment and condo residents, and others as well. All current state and local orders allow for businesses to remain open that support the basic need of shelter for citizens, so these storage facilities fit that shelter requirement.

AUTOMOBILE QUESTIONS, INCLUDING SALE, REPAIR, INSPECTION, AND DETAILING

Q: Are local motor companies that only sell cars and do not offer auto repair allowed to stay open to the public? (Posted April 14, 2020)
A: Businesses that are strictly auto sales may remain open to the public, so long as they are able to comply with all requirements set forth in both the Governor’s Executive Order #131 and the local order effective April 13, 2020. These orders cover maximum occupancy requirements, social distancing rules, required sanitizing
practices, and much more, and stores that are deemed essential retail or allowed to remain open under any order are required to comply with all of these rules and regulations or they risk being cited and/or closed down.

**Q: How is our local order allowed to be more restrictive than the Governor’s Executive Order 121 relating to auto sales? (Posted April 13, 2020)**

**A:** The Governor’s order does not prohibit auto sales in any form, but local governments are authorized to supplement the Governor’s order and may enact local restrictions that are more restrictive than the Governor’s order. New Hanover County and the City of Wilmington conferred with local public health officials and other local governments and developed a specific plan that would allow auto sales to continue while doing so in the safest manner possible.

**Q: Are vehicle test drives allowed? (Posted April 13, 2020)**

**A:** Test drives are highly discouraged as the vehicle itself can become a vector for the virus, and social distancing of six (6) feet between people simply makes traditional test drives impracticable. However, if a business can comply with the provisions set forth in Exhibit A of the April 13th local order, a potential buyer can make a pre-arranged appointment to come to the business, have the salesperson meet them at the business with the vehicle, and then allow the buyer to take a vehicle for an unchaperoned test drive. A test drive may not include a salesperson in the vehicle. Thorough cleaning of any test-driven vehicle, including allowing the vehicle to go unused for 72 hours after the test drive, is necessary in every test drive situation.

**Q: What areas of an auto dealership must still remain closed to the public? (Posted April 13, 2020)**

**A:** Pursuant to the local order dated April 13, 2020, customer lounges should be closed and waiting areas should be restricted to no more persons than can maintain proper social distancing. Customers should be encouraged to drop off vehicles and immediately leave, and to pick up vehicles by appointment so that waiting is minimized. The occupancy of auto showrooms is controlled by the Governor’s Executive Order #131.

**Q: Are car washes and car detail shops allowed to remain open? (April 7, 2020)**

**A:** These businesses are a service that is not specifically addressed under either the Governor’s order or the local order. However, the Governor’s order indicates that service providers who are not specifically addressed but who can maintain social distancing at their business, including between employees and other employees and between employees and customers, will be considered essential businesses. As a result, car washes and car detail shops are allowed to remain open. HOWEVER, our local health department has provided guidance to indicate that having an unrelated person in your vehicle creates a significant risk of spreading the virus. As a result, inside detailing of vehicles is highly discouraged. If a business insists, against advice and guidance, to continue providing inside vehicle detailing services, it is advised that no more than one employee is allowed in any vehicle, and that employees who are working inside vehicles should wear appropriate personal protective equipment like gloves and masks.

**Q: Do I still have to have my car inspection performed and my registration renewed by the expiration date if it expires in the near future? (Posted April 6, 2020)**

**A:** As of the date of this FAQ, we are not aware of any “grace periods” being given for automobile registrations or inspections. Auto repair shops and other businesses who perform these inspections have been allowed to remain open, so there is no reason they cannot be done. If you are worried about someone else being in your car, you can ask the business to wipe down and sanitize the interior of the car before it is returned to you, and you may do the same thing yourself once you get your car home.

**Q: Auto sales relate to mobility. Why aren’t they considered to be essential? (Posted April 3, 2020)**

**A:** While auto sales do relate to mobility, the local order specifically extends the non-essential retail restrictions to auto sales. It restricts auto sales in order to help slow the virus, not because auto sales are or are not essential.
Q: Are loaner vehicles still allowed while a vehicle is repaired? (Posted April 3, 2020)
A: Neither the Governor’s order nor the local order specifically address loaner vehicles, so they are allowed. Thorough cleaning of any loaner vehicle, including allowing the vehicle to go unused for 72 hours after it is loaned, is highly recommended.

Q: Are towing companies allowed to continue business? (Posted March 31, 2020)
A: Towing services are considered an Essential Business under the Governor’s Executive Order 121, and may therefore continue services subject to social distancing requirements.

BOATING, GOLF, TENNIS, AND OTHER RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Q: Are drive-in movies allowed? (Posted April 20, 2020)
A: The Governor’s Order #120 specifically closes movie theaters. It does not differentiate between drive-in and regular movies, so we take that to mean all of them. Additionally, our local order closes all places of public amusement where people may gather, inside or outside, including movie and other theaters. As a result, movie theaters of any kind, drive-in or regular, are not allowed to operate under either the state or local orders.

Q: Can you explain why marinas are allowed to be open? Are they essential businesses? (Posted April 14, 2020)
A: The Governor’s orders have always considered marinas to be essential because they affect travel and are used for recreation. The County’s previous order was more restrictive and determined that marinas should be closed. The new order issued by the County and effective on April 13, 2020, loosened those previous local requirements to bring them in line with the Governor’s order. As a result, since they were previously essential under the Governor’s order, they are still allowed to be open. Social distancing is still required, to the fullest extent practicable.

Q: If two persons reside in the same household, can they share a golf cart? (Posted April 14, 2020)
A: Yes. The revised order dated April 13, 2020, allows for members of the same family to use the same equipment, which includes golf carts. However, the City will not have golf carts available for use at the Municipal Golf Course until Friday, April 17, 2020.

Q: Are City boat ramps and kayak launches open? (Posted April 13, 2020)
A: Yes. All City boat ramps and kayak launches are open.

Q: Are country clubs and social clubs allowed to remain open? (Posted April 13, 2020)
A: No. Under the current local order, all “country clubs and social clubs shall be closed.” As a result, such clubs must close their facilities to the public and their members, with the exception of providing curbside food or delivery of food through any onsite food and beverage providers. Golf courses and tennis/pickleball courts within these clubs may continue to operate, subject to social distancing requirements, and golfing is subject to the provisions of the local order only allowing walking golfers or one golfer per cart and maintaining social distancing requirements. Other sports offered by these clubs must cease. The current local order is effective through April 29, 2020 and may be amended at that time.

Q: Are the City of Wilmington’s tennis courts open? (Posted April 13, 2020)
A: Yes. The City’s tennis courts will be open effective April 14, 2020.

Q: Is the City’s skate park open? (Posted April 1, 2020)
A: Yes, but there must be less than 15 people present within the enclosed area of the park at all times. City staff will monitor to ensure that capacity isn’t exceeded, and social distancing is observed. If the rules are not followed and social distancing practices are not honored, the skate park will close.

Q: Are alcohol sales still allowed at the City’s Municipal Golf Course? (Posted March 31, 2020)
A: Yes, Alcohol sales are allowed at the Muni if they meet the following guidelines:
- They are purchased in closed containers; and
- They are consumed outside of the club house; and
- They are consumed while practicing the social distancing guidelines.

Q: Are all City parks closed? (Posted March 31, 2020)
A: Yes, the current orders close playgrounds, playground equipment, exercise stations, team sports facilities and public gardens. All these areas within City parks are closed and should not be used by the public at this time. Trails and other open public spaces in all parks will remain open.

CONSTRUCTION, LANDSCAPING, AND OTHER OUTDOOR BUSINESSES AND SERVICES

Q: Are residential swimming pool installations considered an essential service? (Posted April 6, 2020)
A: The construction industry (which includes landscaping and other similar businesses) has been deemed essential, so all construction work, whether government, residential, or commercial, and whether or not it has to do with the pandemic, is all allowed under both the state and local orders. As a result, installation of a residential swimming pool is allowed under the current orders, with employees encouraged to practice social distancing to the fullest extent practicable while they are on the job.

Q: Are tree service businesses considered an essential service? (Posted April 6, 2020)
A: Tree services may remain open for business. They are exempted under both the Governor’s order and the local orders since they provide a landscaping and maintenance service, which is deemed essential. The “essential” designation applies in both the commercial and residential contexts and does not depend on whether the work is being done in support of efforts against the virus. Social distancing should be observed by the employees who are working, to the fullest extent practicable.

Q: Are greenhouses considered an essential business and allowed to stay open to the public? (Posted April 3, 2020)
A: Greenhouses are classified as part of an essential industry relating to landscaping, construction, and maintenance, so they are therefore allowed to remain open. Businesses should practice social distancing to the fullest extent practicable.

Q: Is commercial construction considered essential? (Posted April 1, 2020)
A: The construction industry has been deemed essential, so all construction work, whether government, residential or commercial or having to do with the pandemic is all allowed under both state and local orders.

Q: Is fence construction allowed? (Posted March 31, 2020)
A: Yes. All types of construction are considered an essential activity under the Governor’s Executive Order 121, and the New Hanover County declaration does not further restrict fence construction or any other type of construction work.

Q: Can I still go to work if I have a job in construction? (Posted March 31, 2020)
A: Yes, construction businesses can stay open under both the state and local orders. Those businesses are designated as essential, but they are still encouraged to practice social distancing in the workplace, including between employees and between employees and customers.

Q: Would a residential pressure washing, and window cleaning business be considered essential? (Posted March 31, 2020)
A: Yes, under the Governor’s order, building and grounds management and maintenance, including for residential facilities, is allowed as an essential infrastructure service, and it is not excluded by the more restrictive provisions of the County order.

ENFORCEMENT AND COMPLIANCE QUESTIONS

Q: Will there be consequences be for refusal to comply with current restrictions? What will those consequences be? (Posted April 1, 2020)
A: The purpose of the restrictions is to get the public and local businesses to voluntarily comply in order to curb the spread of the virus. Individuals or businesses who are in violation of the restrictions will be counseled first and educated on why they are in violation and asked to comply. If they continue to refuse/comply, violation can be a Class 2 misdemeanor, which could include jail time of up to 60 days and up to a $1,000 fine.

Q: How is the City of Wilmington enforcing the current state and local orders? (Posted April 1, 2020)
A: WPD is enforcing the order within the City. There will be no roadblocks or checkpoints for vehicles, and individuals are not going to be required to present any form of documentation. The emphasis by the WPD is going to be on voluntary compliance and not on issuing citations for criminal offenses, but those who are not compliant will be subjecting themselves to citation and prosecution for violation of an emergency order.

Q: What’s being done about the non-essential shopping in places that aren’t being shut down? (Posted April 1, 2020)
A: If you have a concern regarding a business within the City limits that you believe is not complying with the current orders, you may contact either the Wilmington Police Department, the Mayor’s Office, or the City Attorney’s Office, and someone will direct your concern to the proper place for review. Email is the preferred form of communication so that you can receive a response in writing. Please see the links above to contact those parties.

Q: Will the Wilmington Police Department be pulling people over to check where they are going? (Posted March 31, 2020)
A: No, the Wilmington Police Department (WPD) will not be setting up roadblocks or check points to determine whether people are following the stay at home order. No “papers” are required to prove that you are an essential employee and the purpose of all current restrictions is to get compliance and protect the public, so the WPD will be focused on education and not arrests.

EVictions AND LATE PAYMENTS

Q: Can I be evicted or sued if I cannot pay my rent in entirety? (Posted April 1, 2020)
A: For federally subsidized housing (HUD), there is currently a 120-day moratorium on evictions. For other renters, the Chief Justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court has closed courts until at least June 1st, so no new evictions can be processed until at least that time, which is likely to be extended further. Additionally, the
Governor issued an order on March 30th (Executive Order #124) that addressed a moratorium on utility shut offs and encouraged landlords to forego eviction proceedings until at least after the Chief Justice’s order is lifted.

HUMAN SERVICES AND HEALTH FACILITIES

Q: Are chiropractic offices allowed to remain open under the healthcare exceptions, and does that include massages? (Posted April 3, 2020)

A: In the Governor’s Executive Order #121, healthcare is construed broadly to avoid any impacts to the delivery of healthcare. Chiropractic offices may continue to operate and provide care to patients. However, if the chiropractic office also provides massage services, which are services that the Governor has ordered to cease, such services are not allowed to continue.

Q: Are shelters for the homeless, domestic violence victims, etc. allowed to stay open? (Posted April 2, 2020)

A: The Governor’s order says that residential facilities and shelters for adults, seniors, children, pets, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, victims of domestic violence, the homeless, substance abusers, and the mentally ill are all considered essential and are not required to close. They are encouraged to practice social distancing as much as possible. If one shelter voluntarily decides to close, for whatever reason, other shelters and facilities should still be open.

LODGING AND TOURISM

Q: Is the City taking measures to prevent tourists from traveling to our area? (Posted April 1, 2020)

A: The City cannot legally limit incoming traffic to only in-state drivers. We either have to close all roads to everyone or let everyone come in. However, in the current local order, hotels, motels, and short-term lodging are required to close and not take any new reservations from anyone who is not displaced or needing somewhere to stay as a result of the coronavirus, or who is supporting an essential function (i.e. healthcare workers, truckers with supplies, construction contractors, people who cannot go home because family members are quarantined, people in town taking care of sick relatives, etc.). Extended stay hotels are allowed to keep operating for stays of 28 days or more, but there are not going to be any more short-term stays for vacation or tourism purposes for the duration of the County’s order.

Q: What measures will be enacted for individuals and families who are otherwise homeless or displaced, and therefore living in places like hotels, motels, and short-term residences? (Posted April 1, 2020)

A: None of the social distancing requirements are applicable to the homeless population. There is an exception in the County’s order that allows for extended stay hotels to remain open for business of 28 days or more. There are also exceptions for hotels and motels to rent to individuals who are working to ease the COVID-19 pandemic and those who are otherwise impacted by it. This would include those who have lost their home as a result of losing a job due to COVID-19, etc., but the hotels may require some information or documentation to verify that the need for the rental is related to the pandemic. Please feel free to call New Hanover County’s Coronavirus call center at 910-798-6800 or visit their webpage for resource assistance.

Q: Are innkeepers allowed to rent hotel/motel rooms to individuals with a child or other family member admitted to the hospital but who do not have other local lodging and are not allowed to stay at the hospital due to COVID-19 restrictions? (Posted March 31, 2020)

A: Yes, innkeepers may rent rooms to these individuals upon showing of proof of their circumstances. If individuals have difficulty with innkeepers allowing them to rent rooms, they may reach out to the City Attorney’s
office to provide proof of their circumstances, and City Attorney staff will reach out to the particular lodging facility to provide an interpretation letter confirming whether this is allowed under the particular extenuating circumstances.

Q: Are people who are already staying at local hotels allowed to remain until the end of their stay? (Posted March 31, 2020)
A: Yes. Anyone who was already staying at a hotel or motel at the time that the City’s order went into effect at 5:00 pm on Monday the 30th is allowed to stay there until their stay is over.

Q: Are contractors coming to the area allowed to check-in to local hotels and motels under the current orders? (Posted March 31, 2020)
A: With regard to any new contract workers coming in, workers who are supporting essential functions are allowed to stay at local hotels and motels. The City has asked innkeepers to obtain and keep on file some form of documentation to support why each person is staying at the hotel. The individual hotel or motel will let you know what kind of documentation they require, but it could include copies of work badges, letters from employers, copies of work orders, or other proof that is acceptable to the innkeeper.

PET-RELATED STORES AND SERVICES

Q: Is a dog grooming service allowed to continue operation? (Amended April 7, 2020)
A: Dog grooming is a service that is not specifically addressed under either the Governor’s order or the local order. However, the Governor’s order indicates that service providers who are not specifically addressed but who maintain social distancing at the business, including between its employees and between employees and customers (except at the point of sale), are considered essential businesses. As a result, dog groomers are allowed to remain open if they meet all of these requirements. Any dog grooming business that cannot meet these requirements is required to close.

Q: Are shelters and boarding kennels allowed to operate? (Posted April 2, 2020)
A: Yes. Under the Governor’s order, businesses that provide food, shelter, services, and other necessities of life for animals, including kennels, animal shelters, and adoption facilities, are essential businesses and may remain open.

RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS AND VOLUNTEERING

Q: Are churches and volunteer organizations allowed to set up in areas like parking lots to serve FREE food to people? (Posted April 17, 2020)
A: Serving food for FREE from a private parking lot or other private space is allowed, so long as you have permission from the property owner. Under both the state and local orders, all forms of food distribution are essential as long as they are done by online orders, curbside or in-person pick-up, or delivery. No on-site consumption is permitted, and customers and volunteers/employees should adhere to all social distancing requirements.

Q: Are churches or any other groups or organizations allowed to set up in areas like parking lots to SELL food to people? (Posted April 17, 2020).
A: With regard to the SALE of food, any individual or organization, whether charitable or for-profit, must first make sure that it has the appropriate permits to sell food. Please contact the City’s Zoning Department at 910-254-0900, and the New Hanover County Health Department, to determine what permits, if any, may be required. IF all appropriate permits and permissions are obtained, under both the state and local orders, all forms of food...
sales are allowed as essential, as long as they are done by online orders, curbside or in-person pick-up, or delivery. Customers are not allowed inside any premises where food is prepared, and no on-site consumption is permitted. Customers and volunteers/employees should adhere to all social distancing requirements.

Q: Are churches allowed to have “drive-in” services where everyone comes to one location in their vehicle to park and stays in their vehicle while they listen to a sermon or music? (Posted April 8, 2020)

A: The participation of churches and houses of worship is critical to our community-wide success in flattening the curve and slowing the progress of this virus. We strongly urge all churches and houses of worship to continue with virtual services, including for Easter. We have spoken to our health department leaders, and they believe that we are at a critical stage in the effort to reduce the spread of the virus to a manageable level. They also believe that bringing congregations together, even if people remain in their vehicles, is unnecessarily risky at this time. With all of that said, after further discussion with the Governor’s office, it is the Governor’s interpretation of his own order that “drive-in” worship services should be allowed if sufficient safety precautions are met. As a result, such services will not be considered a violation. Health department leaders strongly recommend that all vehicles maintain a distance of at least six (6) feet from any other vehicle on all sides, all persons stay in their vehicles, and only immediate family or members of the same household occupy the same vehicle. It is further advised that services last no more than one hour in order to prevent people from needing to leave their vehicles for any reason, including going to the restroom. Again, holding such services is against the advice of local health professionals. Please keep in mind that vehicles may not obstruct any street or sidewalk.

Q: Are church members allowed to leave home to do volunteer work, including caring for and maintaining church property, under the current orders? (Posted April 2, 2020)

A: Under both the state and local orders, citizens are allowed to leave their homes for the purpose of volunteer and religious activities, as long as there are no more than 10 people present (including church or organizational staff) and as long as social distancing requirements are met.

Q: Are religious institutions considered essential businesses? (Posted April 1, 2020)

A: Religious Services are considered essential and may continue operating subject to the social distancing and mass gathering (no more than 10 people) requirements that are outlined in the Governor’s order. A mass gathering of more than ten persons in a single room, single space, or any other confined indoor or outdoor space at the same time is prohibited. We encourage all religious institutions to convert to an online or virtual format for the purpose of worship as much as practicable. Church staff are allowed to travel to and from work at the church for any work purpose, including the recording of any virtual programming, as long as staff also maintains social distancing while they are together.

RESTAURANTS AND OTHER FOOD SERVICES

Q: Are companies that produce food allowed to sell their products to customers out the back of large refrigerated trucks? (Posted April 3, 2020)

A: Under both the state and local orders, all forms of food sales are allowed as long as they are not done inside a restaurant and are by online orders, curbside pick-up, and delivery. As a result, food trucks, farmer’s markets, roadside food stands, and even sales out of the back of refrigerated trucks are allowable, as long as they follow the distribution method restrictions and urge their customers and employees to practice social distancing while at the business.

Q: Does a bakery or café inside of a grocery store need to close? (Posted April 2, 2020)

A: A bakery or café inside a grocery store does not have to close down, but if there is a seating area inside the grocery store for consuming goods from the bakery or café, that seating area should be removed so that on-premises consumption is not allowed.
Q: Are food trucks allowed continue operation, including visits to neighborhoods and multi-family complexes, under the current orders? (Posted April 2, 2020)
A: Food trucks are allowed under both the state and local orders. Food trucks are treated like bars and restaurants, so they are able to offer curbside takeout and delivery. They are encouraged to tell their customers to stand at least 6 feet apart while they wait for their food to be prepared.

Q: Can cafés, either stand-alone or inside other retail stores, remain open? (Posted April 1, 2020)
A: Cafés must close to the public, but they can continue to offer take-away and delivery options to customers. As with restaurants, no inside counter or carry-out food or beverage service is allowed.

Q: Can specialty shops, like ice cream parlors, remain open? (Posted April 1, 2020)
A: Yes, just like restaurants and bars, they can remain open for online sales, curbside pickup, and delivery, if they choose.

Q: Are farmer’s markets allowed to remain open? (Posted March 31, 2020)
A: Yes, however the City of Wilmington has made the proactive decision to no longer issue permits for events inside the City’s limits to help further contain the spread of the coronavirus and flatten the curve. Farmer’s markets in general are allowed under both the state and local orders, as they are a source of essential food, so participation in other farmer’s markets is permitted. The vendors are asked to maintain social distancing requirements, both between their employees and with the public. Drive-thru farmer’s markets are approved and encouraged.

Q: Are bookstore allowed to remain open? (Posted April 13, 2020)
A: Bookstores are non-essential retail and are required to close to the public under the County’s current order. They may continue online and curb-side operation or delivery. The Governor’s order said that bookstores
providing educational materials could remain open, but the County’s order is more restrictive and requires them to close in New Hanover County.

Q: Are “bike shops” allowed to remain open? (Posted April 13, 2020)
A: “Bike shops” are allowed under the Governor’s order, but they are non-essential retail under the County’s order and are required to close. If a bike shop has a repair shop component, they will be allowed to remain open if they utilize the curb-side and online services, including drop-off and pick-up.

Q: Are sporting goods stores allowed to remain open? (Posted April 13, 2020)
A: If a sporting goods store sells essential items such as clothing, then the store is allowed to remain open under the County’s new order effective April 13, 2020.

Q: Are furniture stores required to close? (Posted April 13, 2020)
A: Furniture stores are generally considered to be non-essential retail and are required to close to the public under the County’s current order. They may offer online and phone sales, and provide curbside pickup or delivery to customers, but the indoor areas of their business must remain closed. If a furniture store also sells appliances or other essential items, then the store is allowed to remain open. However, for any stores selling mattresses which are allowed to be open, the City encourages store owners to prohibit anyone from laying down on the mattresses, based upon concerns from health department officials relating to the possible transmission of the virus.

Q: Are retail hardware stores and garden centers considered essential? (Posted April 13, 2020)
A: Yes, hardware stores and construction companies, are considered essential services under the Governor's order and are therefore allowed to remain open to the public. Garden centers attached to these businesses, would also be considered essential services as they provide landscaping materials, which are also part of the construction industry, and landscaping is therefore also considered to be an essential business. Essential retail businesses are exempted from the mass gathering restrictions under both the state and local orders, but they are now subject to the regulations and recommendations of the Governor’s Executive Order #131 regarding maximum occupancy, social distancing, and other steps to ensure the safety and health of both employees and customers.

Q: Do grocery stores or essential service stores have to provide their employees with personal protective equipment (PPE) to remain open? (Posted April 13, 2020)
A: Grocery stores are an essential service under all current state and local orders. They are now subject to the regulations and recommendations of the Governor’s Executive Order, #131 regarding maximum occupancy, social distancing, and other steps to ensure the safety and health of both employees and customers. The Governor’s Order does not require that employers provide employees with personal protective equipment, but it does encourage employers to provide employees with cloth masks, if the employees are in positions where it is not possible to maintain social distancing requirements, either with other employees or with customers.

Q: Do fabric stores have to close? (Posted April 13, 2020)
A: Due to recent CDC guidance recommending that people wear fabric masks when they are out in public in areas where social distancing is not as easy to maintain (i.e. grocery stores, pharmacies, etc.), fabric to make those masks is now deemed essential. As a result, fabric stores, and other arts & crafts stores that sell fabric and sewing supplies, are allowed to re-open to the public.

Q: Are gift shops inside other essential businesses able to remain open to the public? (Posted April 13, 2020)
A: Under the new state and local orders effective April 13, 2020, an essential business that contains a gift shop inside the business will be subject to the occupancy requirements of the Governor’s Executive Order #131, and may remain open as long as those requirements are met.

Q: If furniture stores are required to shut down as not essential, can big box stores like Wal-Mart and Big Lots continue to sell furniture? (Posted April 13, 2020)

A: Furniture is not essential retail under either the state or local orders currently in effect. However, if stores that sell essential retail items also sell furniture, they are no longer required to rope off and make inaccessible any areas within their stores where furniture is available.

Q: Do the Goodwill stores have to close? (Posted April 13, 2020)

A: Based upon the County’s new order effective April 13, 2020, clothing is now considered to be essential. Therefore, the inside of Goodwill stores is considered essential retail and is allowed to be open to the public.

Q: Are mattress businesses which do not sell anything, but mattresses and associated furniture/equipment allowed to remain open? (Posted April 13, 2020)

A: No. Mattresses are not essential retail under either the state or local orders, so mattress stores must close. Online and curbside purchase and delivery are still available.

Q: Are electronics stores, and electronics sections of other stores, allowed to remain open? (Posted April 13, 2020)

A: Electronics, including cell phones and computer equipment and televisions, are considered essential for mobility and telecommunication under for the Governor’s order and the local orders, so stores offering electronics may continue to operate. Video games, DVD’s, music, etc., should is not considered essential. Online options are still available for music and other stores that sell only those items.

Q: Are florists allowed to be open? (Posted April 9, 2020)

A: Florists may continuing operating using online sales and delivery and curbside pickup, but in-store retail sales to the public is not allowed.

Q: Are vape shops allowed to stay open? (Posted April 6, 2020)

A: Vape shops, just like cigar and tobacco shops, are considered non-essential and must close all in-person shopping areas to the public. However, online, delivery, and curb-side service may be implemented.

Q: Can jewelry stores sell products to customers through in-store operations? (Posted April 6, 2020)

A: Jewelry stores are not considered essential retail and must close their stores to the public under both the Governor’s order and under the current local orders. To the extent that a jewelry store desires to buy jewelry or accept jewelry on a pawn basis from the public, those transactions may be carried out curbside at the store, but the public is still not allowed to go into the store.

Q: Are cigar shops considered essential businesses? (Posted April 1, 2020)

A: Cigar Shops are considered non-essential and must close all in-person shopping areas to the public. However, delivery and curb-side service may be implemented.

Q: Are “corner stores” allowed to stay open? (Posted March 31, 2020)

A: Yes, corner stores are essential services, just like grocery stores and other convenience stores, so they may remain open and are encouraged to maintain the social distancing guidelines.
Q: Is a botanical nursery allowed to remain open as an essential business? (Posted March 31, 2020)
A: Yes, a botanical nursery may remain open for business, as it is exempted under both the Governor’s order and by New Hanover County since it provides products for compliance with planting and landscaping regulations. Social distancing must be observed.

Q: Are cell phone businesses considered essential? (Posted March 31, 2020)
A: Yes, cell phone sales and service businesses can stay open under both the state and local orders, as they are necessary in order to carry out essential services.

Q: Is the homeless population subject to the same gathering restrictions as everyone else, even when gathering for meals offered by non-profit organizations? (Posted March 31, 2020)
A: Organizations that provide food and other necessities of life for economically disadvantaged individuals may continue offering services, including meals to the homeless population, but everyone involved should maintain 6-foot social distancing, and more than 10 persons should not congregate in the same area at the same time.

SOCIAL DISTANCING AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS IN ESSENTIAL BUSINESSES

Q. Do fast food workers have to stay 6 feet apart and wear gloves? (Posted April 13, 2020)
A: There is currently no requirement for restaurant workers to wear gloves or other personal protective equipment other than what is required by standard food safety regulations, but these businesses are now subject to the Governor’s Executive Order #131, which encourages employers to provide employees with cloth masks, if the employees are in positions where it is not possible to maintain social distancing requirements, either with other employees or with customers.

Q: Do grocery stores or essential service stores have to provide their employees with personal protective equipment (PPE) to remain open? (Posted April 13, 2020)
A: There is currently no requirement for restaurant workers to wear gloves or other personal protective equipment other than what is required by standard food safety regulations, but these businesses are now subject to the Governor’s Executive Order #131, which encourages employers to provide employees with cloth masks, if the employees are in positions where it is not possible to maintain social distancing requirements, either with other employees or with customers. However, the police do not have authority to enforce internal business practices or to intervene in disagreements between employees and employers on what practices should be employed over and above the Governor’s order.

Q: Is the homeless population subject to the same gathering restrictions as everyone else, even when gathering for meals offered by non-profit organizations? (Posted March 31, 2020)
A: Organizations that provide food and other necessities of life for economically disadvantaged individuals may continue offering services, including meals to the homeless population, but everyone involved should maintain 6-foot social distancing, and more than 10 persons should not congregate in the same area at the same time.

TRAVEL AND MOBILITY

Q: Why is the City not closing public transportation? (Posted April 6, 2020)
A: All forms of transportation are essential in order to support workers who are going to and from essential jobs and members of the public who are traveling to obtain essential products and services like groceries and medicine. Unfortunately, having a personal vehicle is not an option for many people, so public transportation must remain operational in order to meet the needs of those individuals.
Q: Why are NYC planes still coming into Wilmington? (Posted April 3, 2020)
A: The City cannot legally limit incoming air traffic to only Wilmington or North Carolina residents, or exclude travelers from any particular area. The state or federal government would need to make that decision, and there has been no discussion of that to date. The airport does have screening measures in place, and you can contact the Wilmington International Airport at 910-341-4125 or the Airport Authority directly if you have questions or concerns about what those screening measures are.

Q: Can we leave our house to help elderly neighbors? (Posted April 1, 2020)
A: Yes, it is perfectly fine and encouraged to help your neighbors with groceries and other needs, as long as you maintain the proper social distancing.

Q: What should City of Wilmington residents, who are returning home from another county, state, or country do upon arrival back in our area? (Posted March 31, 2020)
A: Those residents should be advised to contact the New Hanover County Coronavirus Call Center at 910-798-6800, 7 days a week from 7:30am to 6pm, upon arriving back in Wilmington so that health professionals can determine what steps are appropriate given each particular situation.