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Gov. Wolf, Secretary Levine Provide Updated Guidance, Stress Need for Compliance as Cases Rise

[Updated Business Guidance](#)
[Business Waiver Application Form](#)
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Harrisburg, PA – Governor Tom Wolf and Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel Levine provided an update today on their orders to close all non-life-sustaining businesses in Pennsylvania at 8 p.m. yesterday, March 19, as the state seeks relief to save lives, stop the spread of COVID-19 and help workers and businesses through this challenging and quickly changing situation.

“Yesterday, I made the difficult decision to order the closure of the physical locations of businesses that are not critical to sustaining life in a pandemic, and to practice social distancing for all others,” said Governor Wolf. “We’re in an unprecedented crisis and we need to use every tool at our disposal. The difficult decisions we make now will make it possible for our health care workers to manage this crisis as we see the full brutality of the virus in the coming weeks.”

The orders to close the physical locations of all non-life-sustaining business took effect at 8 p.m. last night, March 19. Enforcement actions against businesses that do not close physical locations will begin at 12:01 a.m. Saturday, March 21. Businesses are encouraged to use virtual or telework operations if they can do so.

A list of both life-sustaining and non-life-sustaining businesses is [here](#). Business guidance has been updated after conversations with businesses, stakeholders, and individuals—in consultation with the Department of Health—and has been aligned with the [Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency advisory released yesterday](#).

This is an evolving situation and decisions will continue to be made and revisited as needed. If a business listed for closure believes it could help mitigate this crisis by providing a life sustaining service, it can seek an exemption. Businesses can get a waiver application through the [Department of Community and Economic Development \(DCED\) website](#), or may contact the Department of

Community and Economic Development at ra-dcedcs@pa.gov or by calling 1-877-PA-HEALTH and selecting option 1.

“I was a business owner for much of my adult life and I understand your concerns,” said Gov. Wolf. “These are uncharted waters and we’re going to do everything we can to help the people and businesses of Pennsylvania.”

DCED offers working capital loans that could be of assistance to businesses impacted by COVID-19. Resources and information will be posted to <http://dced.pa.gov/resources> as they become available. [Governor Wolf announced](#) yesterday the availability of low-interest loans for small businesses and eligible non-profits in all 67 counties in Pennsylvania through the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA).

The spread of COVID-19 is increasing at an exponential pace, especially in urban areas and southeast Pennsylvania. New cases are beginning to appear in other counties, which suggests community spread. The Department of Health reported earlier today there were 83 new cases of COVID-19, bringing the statewide total to 268 Pennsylvanians who have tested positive in 26 counties.

“While we continue to be concerned about the spread of this virus to seniors, a preliminary analysis from the CDC this week shows that 20 percent of all hospitalized patients in the U.S. are between 20 and 44 years old,” said Dr. Rachel Levine. “We are seriously concerned that individuals in their 20 to 44 age range are not heeding the message to stay home and are creating an unnecessary risk to themselves and others.”

The Department of Health is working with health systems and hospitals to determine their current abilities to handle a surge of people needing hospitalization and the commonwealth is looking for all options to add capacity for the health care system to care for a surge of Pennsylvanians needing care.

“There is one way to make sure people don’t need to be hospitalized and we don’t strain our health care system: Stay calm. Stay home. Stay safe,” said Dr. Levine.

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