



211 N. Sherman
Mexia, Texas 76667

254-562-4118
254-562-4181
254-562-3547 Fax

Municipal Court
Judge Judy Chambers

**COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Mexia Municipal Court,
City of Mexia, Limestone County, Texas**

January 5, 2021

Recognizing the need to ensure the health and safety of defendants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, judge, and any other individuals entering the building housing the court, the **City of Mexia** will implement the following protective measures:

General:

1. The judge and prosecutor shall conduct hearings remotely over Zoom. The bailiff shall accompany the defendant to the courtroom, which is a segregated location within the court facility, where the Zoom equipment is set up for use. Safe distancing and sanitizing procedures will be strictly enforced. The judge and the prosecutor will use Zoom in another segregated office.
2. If it is determined that a Zoom hearing is unable to be held or the defendant is unable to participate in a Zoom hearing, the judge will consider holding an in-person hearing. All health and safety precautions and protocols will be utilized in the event of any in-person hearings. An acknowledgment statement of the in-person hearing will be signed by the defendant.
3. The judge and court staff will comply with the Emergency Orders issued by the Supreme Court of Texas and Court of Criminal Appeals, including conducting in-person proceedings according to the guidance issued by the Office of Court Administration regarding safe social distancing, maximum group size, and other restrictions and precautions.
4. The judge and court staff will use all reasonable efforts to limit court proceedings.
5. The local County Judge will maintain regular communication with the local health authority and the Court will adjust this operating plan as necessary with conditions in the city.

Judge and Court Staff Health:

1. Judge and court staff Monitoring Requirements: Each individual will pay attention to their own health and to other person's health behavior. If you or others are ill, it must be reported and the person ill will be required to leave premises.
2. Judges or court staff who feel feverish or have measured temperatures equal to or greater than 99.6°F, or with new or worsening signs or symptoms of COVID-19 such as cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing,

chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, diarrhea, or having known close contact with a person who is confirmed to have COVID-19 will not be permitted to enter the building and should seek medical advice.

3. Judge and court staff will be provided face coverings, gloves and tissues and must practice safe social distancing and appropriate hygiene recommendations at all time.
4. Protective Measures: Wearing face masks and / or gloves, utilizing hand sanitizer, using disinfectant spray and disinfectant cleaner. Washing hands thoroughly and frequently, refrain from touching face and practice safe social distancing. Cough or sneeze into tissue and discard in trash or use bend of arm if needed.

Scheduling:

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building:
Drive-thru window service is available 8am to 4pm Monday thru Friday. It is highly recommended that persons use the drive-thru window if possible. The inside walk-up window is available 8am to 4pm Monday thru Friday. Inside the building plea appearances before the Judge are on the 4th Friday from 10am till noon and 1:15 till 3:30pm. The pre-scheduled hearings before the city attorney and judge are on the 4th Friday. Persons inside the building will be reminded to practice safe social distancing and to wear face coverings or may be asked to leave.
2. Hearings will be held remotely utilizing Zoom, as stated above.
3. If a Zoom hearing cannot be held and an in-person hearing takes place, all health and safety protocols will be strictly adhered to.

Vulnerable Persons:

1. Individuals who are over age 65 and any individuals with serious underlying health conditions, such as high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma, and those whose immune systems are compromised such as by chemotherapy for cancer or with other major health conditions are considered to be vulnerable populations.
2. Court staff will include information on orders setting hearings, dockets notices and in other communications notifying individuals who are in vulnerable populations of the ability to contact the court to identify themselves as a vulnerable individual and receive alternate accommodations. A notice with this information will be posted on the courts' websites and in conspicuous locations around the court building (*a copy of which is attached*).
3. Vulnerable persons who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by either rescheduling or doubling the recommended safe social distancing or relocating to a separate location away from others, if possible.

Safe Social Distancing:

1. All persons not from the same household who are permitted in the court building will be required to maintain adequate safe social distancing of at least 6 feet.
2. Each restroom has been evaluated to determine the appropriate capacity to ensure social distancing and the maximum capacity has been posted on each restroom door. The location of restrooms has also been considered as for as being readily available for public use.

"Gallery"

3. The maximum number of persons permitted in the gallery of each courtroom has been determined and posted. The maximum capacity of the courtroom will be monitored and enforced by the Bailiff, court staff or Police department staff.
4. The gallery seating of the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate safe social distancing.

"Well"

5. In the courtroom, the tables, witness stand, judge's bench, clerk and bailiff seating have been arranged in such a way so that there is social distancing of at least 6 feet between each space.

Hygiene:

1. Hand sanitizer dispensers have been placed in the lobby of the building, inside of courtroom, bathrooms and individual offices.
2. Tissues are available in the lobby, in the courtroom and individual offices.

Screening:

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, the Bailiff, Court staff, Fire Department EMTs or Police will ask the individuals if they are feeling feverish; have a cough, shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing; or have been in close contact with a person who is confirmed to have COVID-19. Individuals who indicate yes to any of these questions will be refused admittance to the court building.
2. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, the Bailiff, Court staff, EMT or Police Department staff may use an infrared thermometer to determine the temperature of the individual. Individuals whose temperature equals or exceeds 100.0°F will be refused admittance to the court building.
3. Inmates being transported from the jail to the court building will be screened for symptoms of COVID-19 and have their temperature taken prior to transport. Inmates with symptoms or a temperature equal to or above 99.6°F will not be transported to the court building.
4. Staff who are screening individuals entering the court building will have access to hand sanitizer, disinfectant and tissue.

Face Coverings:

1. All individuals entering the court building will be required to wear face coverings over the mouth and nose at all times.
2. Individuals will be encouraged to bring face coverings with them, but if the individual does not have a face covering, a disposable face covering will be provided.
3. Individuals who are expected to possibly be in the court building for over 15 minutes will be provided a disposable face covering to be worn while in the court building.

Cleaning:

1. Staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned at least every two hours.
2. Staff will disinfect courtroom between defendant usage.
3. Staff will thoroughly clean the courtroom at the end of each day the courtroom is used.
4. Staff have been provided cleaning supplies shown to be effective with this coronavirus.
5. Staff have been provided appropriate personal protective equipment.

Other:

1. The Department of State Health Service's "Stop the Spread of Germs" and "Cover Your Cough" flyers have been posted, both in English and Spanish, inside the building. Additional flyers are also posted concerning Covid-19.

I have conferred with Court staff, the Police Chief and the City Manager regarding this new Operating Plan. The City Manager has conferred with the Mayor and the Fire Chief regarding EMTs. I have also conferred with Limestone County Judiciary and the County Health Official regarding the operating plan. Appropriate Covid-19 documentation is attached to this plan. I will ensure that this Operating Plan is in force and proceedings will be conducted consistent with the plan.

Date:

Jan. 6, 2021

Presiding Judge of Municipal Court

Judy E. Chambers
Judy Chambers

Operating Plan Approved By:

Date:

01-06-2021

Mexia City Manager

Eric Garretty
Eric Garretty

Date:

01/06/2021

Mexia Mayor

Geary Smith
Geary Smith

Date:

01/07/2021

Mexia Police Chief

Brian Bell
Brian Bell

Date:

Regional Judge