

COVID-19 Operating Plan for the City of Tomball Municipal Court

Recognizing the need to ensure the health and safety of litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, judges, and other individuals entering the buildings housing the courts, the City of Tomball Municipal Court will implement the following protective measures:

General

1. All judges 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 social distancing, maximum group size, and other restrictions and precautions.
2. All judges will use all reasonable efforts to conduct proceedings remotely.
3. The presiding judge of the municipal court will maintain communication with the mayor and the local health authority (when needed) to adjust this operating plan as necessary with conditions in the city.
4. Judges will begin setting non-essential in-person proceedings no sooner than June 1, 2020

Judge and Court Staff Health

1. Judges and court staff who can perform the essential functions of their job remotely will telework when possible according to work schedules set forth by the City Administration.
2. Judge and Court Staff Monitoring Requirements: Judges and Court Staff will self-monitor, monitor their workmates, and follow all monitoring guidelines set forth by the City Administration.
3. Judges or Court Staff who feel feverish or have measured temperatures equal to 100.4°F or greater, 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.
4. Judges and Court Staff will be required to wear face coverings, practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations when appropriate according to guidelines set forth by the City Administration. Judges and Staff will be provided information regarding CDC guidelines on how to make and use masks. Judges and Staff will be provided information regarding how to recognize symptoms of COVID-19 and how to stop the spread of the virus.

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building: Court Staff will contact each person scheduled for court by phone. Court Staff will arrange for persons to appear remotely whenever possible. Persons who are unable or unwilling to appear remotely will be granted continuances for July or later. Persons who wish to negotiate with the prosecutor via email will be given instructions on how to do so. Persons who wish to

enter pleas, pay fines, or begin payment plans will be given instructions on how to do so remotely or by coming to the Court Clerks' window during business hours to sign the necessary paperwork. Persons who wish to attend an in-person hearing will be scheduled for the next available docket. All dockets will be limited to no more than 30 persons. Each docket will be broken into 3 separate segments, scheduled at 30 minute increments, consisting of 10 persons each. Bailiffs will not allow more than 10 persons in the courtroom at any one time. When the 10 person limit is reached, the Bailiff will instruct access persons to wait in their cars until someone leaves the building.

Vulnerable Populations

1. Individuals who are age 65 or older and 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 other conditions requiring such therapy are considered to be vulnerable populations.
2. Each judge 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 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 populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated when contacted individually by phone. Court Staff will screen each person and arrange for remote hearings, continuances, or other accommodations whenever appropriate.

Social Distancing

1. All persons not from the same household who are permitted in the court building will be required to maintain adequate social distancing of at least 6 feet. The Bailiff and Court staff will ensure that persons gathered in the lobby or waiting in line will maintain proper distance.
2. Public common areas, including breakrooms, snack rooms, and water fountains have been closed to the public.

Gallery

3. The maximum number of persons permitted in the gallery of the courtroom will be monitored and enforced by the Bailiff.
4. The Bailiff will ensure that persons will be seated at least 6 feet apart in the courtroom.
5. Prior to each docket, the Bailiff and Court Staff will clearly mark chairs designating which chairs are to be used and which chairs are to be avoided.

Well

6. Counsel 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 at the entrances to the building, outside of the courtroom, and outside of bathrooms.
2. Tissues, hand sanitizers, and waste bins have been placed near the door of the courtroom, at counsel tables, at the witness stand, on the judges' benches, and in the hallways.
3. The Department of State Health Service's "Stop the Spread of Germs Flyer" has been posted in multiple locations on each floor of the court building.
4. Signage will be provided in each bathroom providing information on proper washing and sanitation techniques.

Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, the Bailiff will ask the individuals if they are feeling feverish; have a cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, or any other symptoms of COVID-19 according to the CDC or Governor's published guidelines; 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. Signage will be posted at the entrance of the building notifying members of the public of these guidelines.
3. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, the Bailiff will use an infrared thermometer (if available) to determine the temperature of the individual. Individuals whose temperature equals or exceeds 100.4°F or greater will be refused admittance to the court building.
4. Inmates being transported from the jail to the courtroom 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 courtroom.
5. Staff who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment, including masks and gloves (if available).

Face Coverings

1. All individuals entering the court building will be required to wear face coverings at all times.
2. Individuals will be encouraged to bring cloth face coverings with them, but if the individual does not have a cloth face covering, a disposable face mask will be provided if available.
3. Individuals who will be required to be in the court building for over 1 hour will be provided surgical masks and required to wear them while in the court building if the supply is available.

Cleaning and Disinfecting

1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building, paying special attention to commonly touched surfaces, so that common spaces are cleaned at least daily.
2. Court building cleaning staff have been provided cleaning supplies shown to be effective with this coronavirus including EPA registered disinfectants.

3. Court building cleaning staff have been trained on proper cleaning techniques and provided appropriate personal protective equipment.

I have attempted to confer with all judges of courts with courtrooms in the court building regarding this Operating Plan. In developing the plan, I consulted with the local health authority and mayor . I will ensure that the judges of courts with courtrooms in the court building covered by this Operating Plan conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.

Date: 5/8/2020



6/15/2020

Presiding Judge of Municipal Court

Attachment of links for information

Harris County Public Health

(HCPH): <https://publichealth.harriscountytexas.gov/Resources/2019-Novel-Coronavirus>

- Information on [testing available in Harris County](#)
- Signage on [proper hand washing](#) and [social distancing floor decals](#)
- One-pagers on [testing for staff, cleaning and disinfecting, and how to properly wear a mask](#)

Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS)

- <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/tools.aspx>

- [COVID-19 Testing Site Locator](#)
- [Signage](#) on stopping the spread of germs, proper hand washing, face coverings

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/print-resources.html?Sort=Date%3A%3Adesc>

- Guidance on [how to make cloth face coverings](#)
- Signage on [COVID-19 symptoms, stop the spread of germs, and stay home if you are sick](#)

Please stay connected with Harris County Public Health on social media to stay up to date on available resources and our COVID-19 response: [HCPH Facebook page](#) and [HCPH Twitter page](#).