



William A. Vogle
Robertson County Mayor
108 Courthouse
Springfield, Tennessee 37172
Phone (615)384-2476 ~ Fax (615)384-0617

PRESS RELEASE

JULY 7, 2020

FROM ROBERTSON COUNTY MAYOR, BILLY A. VOGLE

Dear City Mayors and Citizens of Robertson County:

On July 3, Governor Lee's Executive Order No. 54 granted county mayors in 89 counties the authority to issue local mask requirements in the event of a significant rise in COVID-19 cases. A copy of that Governor's Order is attached. After consulting with health professionals and discussions with city and county leaders, I am issuing a county-wide Executive Order requiring the wearing of face masks in public places. We are currently experiencing a public health emergency. We need everyone's help to slow the trend of rising COVID-19 cases. My purpose is to reduce the rate of infection of this deadly virus.

Over the past couple of weeks, our numbers of confirmed cases have risen dramatically, which is concerning and dangerous.

Pandemic fatigue is real; our confusion and frustration is real...but now is the time to take proactive measures and focus on the health of our family, friends, neighbors and community. Not only has this virus had a detrimental effect on the health and welfare of our citizens but has also been responsible for wrecking our economic welfare.

Robertson County has been in contact today with legal representatives of other surrounding Counties and the legal representatives of the County Technical Advisory Services (CTAS), who represent and advise all Tennessee County governments. Further, CTAS representatives advise

that these issues have been discussed with legal representatives of MTAS, which is the similar entity that represents and advises Tennessee cities. It appears that these parties agree as follows:

1. The Governor's above Executive Order grants to the County Mayor, without any local City action necessary, the authority to require face coverings for all persons in each County, unless exempted by the Governor's Order, and applies to all persons who both reside within the City limits of a municipality within the County, and those persons that reside in the more rural areas of the County outside a City.
2. Upon issuance of such Local Emergency Order by the County Mayor, as Agreed by CTAS and MTAS, such an Order takes the force of State law, and as such is enforceable by not only the County Sheriff's Department, but officers of each municipal police department in the County, in the same manner as any other State Law.

It is my understanding that officials in Williamson County and Sumner Counties have issued such Orders yesterday.

My first thought was to issue an Order which required persons to determine when they entered a public place if, in their judgement, appropriate CDC social distancing could be obtained, and if not, then to either leave or put on a mask at that point. I am advised that because of the ambiguity in such requirement this is likely not legally enforceable and could draw the County into legal action.

Based upon all of the above, I have signed the attached County Executive Emergency Order. I expect other surrounding Counties to soon issue similar Orders.

This is a very fast-moving issue and I wanted to reach out to each of you regarding our understanding of these circumstances. Since Robertson County is in the higher bracket for COVID cases in the State, it seems this would best for the protection of our citizens and guests.

Now it is up to all of us to be responsible and to take the advice of health professionals. We need to change the current dynamic to slow the spread. Health professionals recommend that wearing face coverings is the most effective way to slow the spread of the virus. If community action is not taken, the spread of this virus will continue to intensify and our daily activities will be impacted. If we don't take these steps, we may end up where we started with businesses closing which in turn will have a devastating effect on our family and our ability to earn a living. With this Order, I am asking that you wear a mask. This Order will be enforced.

Thank you for your cooperation in this matter. Thank you for keeping your family and our community safe. God Bless.



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Robertson County, Tennessee



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DECLARATION OF PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY BY ROBERTSON COUNTY MAYOR

WHEREAS, the President of the United States, the Governor of the State of Tennessee, and the Mayors of a number of Counties and Cities in the state of Tennessee have previously made emergency declarations related to the COVID-19 pandemic, and have recognized it as a public health emergency; and

WHEREAS, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Tennessee Department of Health (TDH) advise the use of cloth or other types of face coverings may slow the spread of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, immediate action to slow the spread of COVID-19 in our communities is necessary in order to be able to safely allow governmental operations to continue, businesses to remain open, and schools to reopen in the fall; and

WHEREAS, widespread use of face coverings is believed to be effective in slowing the spread of COVID-19 by reducing the chances of symptomatic and asymptomatic people transmitting the virus to others, especially when used together with other protocols including 6-foot social distancing and hand hygiene; and

WHEREAS, on July 3, 2020, Governor Bill Lee signed Executive Order 54, strongly urging all persons to wear cloth face coverings or other similar coverings in public settings where being in close proximity to others is anticipated, and

WHEREAS, Governor Lee, through Executive Order 54, also delegated authority to County Mayors in the 89 counties that do not have a locally-run health department (including Robertson County) to issue Orders requiring the wearing of face coverings within their jurisdictions, subject to certain limitations, for the purposes of slowing the spread of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, the numbers of positive COVID-19 cases in Robertson County and surrounding counties has significantly increased in the last thirty days; and

WHEREAS, widespread use of face coverings is a preferred alternative to the continued closure of schools and the closure of businesses in our community, which closures would likely become necessary if action is not taken; and

WHEREAS, after careful consideration of these issues, the County Mayor finds that the wearing of cloth or other face coverings should be required in certain circumstances, and that such a requirement should take effect as soon as possible all in order to better protect the personal safety and economic well being of persons in Robertson County.

NOW, THEREFORE, PURSUANT TO THE AUTHORITY DELEGATED BY EXECUTIVE ORDER 54 AND PURSUANT TO GOVERNOR LEE'S RECOGNITION OF A CONTINUING STATE OF EMERGENCY AND MAJOR DISASTER RELATED TO COVID-19, the Mayor of Robertson County, Tennessee, issues a Declaration of Emergency related to the COVID-19 pandemic, and

IT IS ORDERED that cloth or other face coverings that cover the nose and mouth of a person to impede the spread of the virus during speaking, coughing, sneezing or other action, shall be required in Robertson County, Tennessee, within all publicly-accessible areas of commercial business establishments; in public outdoor areas where social distancing of at least six feet cannot be maintained; and within the publicly-accessible areas of business offices where there is direct interaction with the public and social distancing of at least six feet cannot be maintained. A "commercial business establishment" means any establishment that sells goods or services, or a combination thereof, including but not limited to grocery stores, restaurants, lobbies and public spaces in hotels and other places of lodging, pharmacies, banks, bars, salons, retail stores, medical and dental offices, and entertainment and sports venues. This Order applies to all of Robertson County, both within and outside any local city or municipality.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that this Order does not apply to:

1. Any person who is under age 12;
2. Any person who cannot safely wear a face covering because he/she has trouble breathing due to an underlying health condition or another bona fide medical or health-related reason for not wearing a face covering;
3. Anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove a face covering without assistance;
4. Persons in a private residence;
5. Persons who are outdoors, unless the person cannot substantially maintain appropriate 6-foot social distancing from others outside of the person's household;
6. Persons while eating or drinking;
7. Persons in a place of worship (unless a face covering is required by the place of worship), although persons in places of worship are strongly encouraged to wear face coverings to slow the spread of COVID-19;
8. Persons within private motor vehicles, unless such vehicle is being used for public transportation or a vehicle for hire;

9. Persons working under conditions where appropriate social distancing of at least six feet from others outside the person's household is substantially maintained;
10. Persons present in government facilities, or on government premises, who shall be subject to the rules and regulations of the governmental entity operating the facility or premises. Persons present in the public areas of all Robertson County government facilities will wear cloth or other face coverings, subject to the age and health restrictions outlined herein, and subject to number 11, below. Other local governmental entities may issue their own directives regarding their facilities;
11. Persons in a voting site for the purpose of voting or administering an election; although such persons are strongly encouraged to wear face coverings to slow the spread of COVID-19;
12. Persons who are engaging in strenuous exercise and/or physical activity, provided, however, that such persons shall maintain 6-foot social distancing when not wearing a face covering;
13. Persons for whom wearing a face covering would pose a safety or security risk.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that businesses and facilities subject to this Order shall post signage at public entrances informing patrons of the requirement to wear a mask within the establishment, and shall enforce the requirement within the establishment.

This local order constitutes an order promulgated pursuant to Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 58, Chapter 2, Part 1. While it is the hope and expectation that Robertson County citizens will comply with this Order out of a sense of civic duty and respect for their fellow citizens, and attempts at education and communication are the preferred methods of obtaining compliance, state law provides for enforcement of this Order if necessary. Pursuant to Executive Order 54 and Tennessee Code Annotated §58-2-120, violation of this Order shall constitute a Class A misdemeanor.

This Order shall become effective at 11:59 p.m. on Wednesday, July 8, 2020, and will expire on August 3, 2020 at 11:59 p.m., unless sooner cancelled or unless extended, and may be extended from time to time.



Billy A. Vogle, Mayor
Robertson County, Tennessee