



City of Hitchcock

Newsletter April 2020

GOVERNOR AND GALVESTON COUNTY EXTEND ORDERS FOR ESSENTIAL SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

On March 31, Governor Greg Abbott issued an Executive Order that renews and expands the Governor’s previous directive to minimize social gatherings and minimize contact with people who are not in the same household. It also renews the Governor’s directive to avoid eating or drinking at bars, restaurants, and food courts, and visiting gyms or massage establishments, and it expands the order to include tattoo studios, piercing studios, and cosmetology salons. In accordance with federal guidelines, people are still prohibited from visiting nursing home, state supported living centers, assisted living facilities, or long-term care facilities unless to provide critical assistance. Additionally, schools will remain temporarily closed through May 4, 2020.

To stay in line with the actions taken at the state level, Galveston County Judge Mark Henry on April 1 issued a new “Order of Essential Services and Activities” for Galveston County mirroring Governor’s Abbott executive order. Both Governor Abbott’s statewide executive order and the new “Order of Essential Services and Activities” for Galveston County took effect on April 2, 2020 at 12:01 a.m. and will last until April 30, 2020.

For people and businesses that have questions about Governor Abbott’s new executive order or what is considered essential, they can visit www.tdem.texas.gov/essentialservices/ or send an email to essentialservices@tdem.texas.gov.

To view the Hitchcock City declaration approved by the Commission visit our website at www.cityofhitchcock.org.

GETTING A COMPLETE COUNT – United States Census 2020

Do your part to ensure a complete count by responding right away. You should have received a letter in the mail from the Census Bureau inviting you to respond to the census in one of three easy ways: online, by phone or by mail. Make sure you are counted by filling out your Census online at www.census.gov or sending your questionnaire through the mail.



HITCHCOCK PD GIVEN AUTHORITY TO ISSUE CITATIONS

As part of Hitchcock’s amended disaster declaration, the Hitchcock City Commission granted the Hitchcock Police Department the authority to issue citations for the following misdemeanors:

Class B: Any person who knowingly fails to comply with a rule or order issued in conjunction with or by authority of a disaster declaration or an emergency operations plan issued or adopted under Chapter 418 of the Texas Government Code (this includes Galveston County’s Stay at Home Order and Governor Abbot’s Executive Order) shall be punished by a fine not to exceed \$1,000 and confinement in jail for a term not longer than 180 days.

Class C: Any person who knowingly fails to comply with a rule adopted under Section 122.006 of the Texas Health & Safety Code shall be punished by a fine not to exceed \$2,000. (Ultimately a judge will determine the fine.) The issuance of a citation is intended as a “last resort” for Hitchcock PD officers when they encounter situations of citizens or businesses who are not in compliance with the mandated city, county, and state declarations. When at all possible, officers will issue warnings to individuals, businesses, and/or groups before issuing a citation.

To report a possible violation of the state, county, or City disaster declaration call Hitchcock PD at (409) 986-5559.

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TEMPORARY SUSPENSION OF UTILITY SERVICE CUTOFFS WILL BE IN EFFECT FOR SIXTY (60) DAYS.

As a municipal owned utility, we are here to respond in times of need and support our customers who are experiencing difficulty paying their utility bills. Because of the effects of the COVID-19 situation, we understand that some customers are concerned about being able to make their utility payments. We recently implemented some changes to make sure our customers' utilities remain uninterrupted. Please review the implemented changes and options for making payments.

IMPLEMENTED CHANGES:

Temporarily Suspend Utility Service Disconnections for Nonpayment

To provide relief for those who are not currently able to pay for utility services because of the COVID-19 crisis, there will be a temporary freeze on utility disconnects for the next 60 days at which time this strategy will be re-evaluated.

Provide for Alternative Utility Bill Payment Arrangements

In addition to the freeze on utility disconnects, we ask that any Customer impacted by COVID-19 needing assistance paying their utility bill to please call 409-986-5591 during normal business hours to request payment arrangements or payment plan.

We encourage customers to stay current on their utility bills

or to work with utility personnel on payment plan. Payments can still be made in person. However, customers are encouraged to use alternative options to make payments. If you normally pay your bill at our customer service window, we strongly encourage you to pay your utility bill via credit card online at www.cityofhitchcock.org or by phone 833-282-0826. You can also drop your utility payment in the secure overnight drop box located on the west side of City Hall. Customers paying by mail or set up on automatic credit card can continue to pay using these methods.



HELP PROTECT OUR TRASH COLLECTORS

In an effort to protect the health and safety of our trash collectors, new guidelines are in place to ensure workers are protected from direct contact from trash and waste during the collection process. Residents must place all trash in a bag before placing it in a garbage receptacle or trash can. No loose items in bins will be picked up. For questions or concerns, contact AmeriWaste at 281-331-8400.

Follow Safe Disposal Guidelines:

- * Place all trash in a bag before placing in a garbage receptacle, trash can, or bin.
- * Loose items should NOT be placed in containers.

PUBLIC WORKS SERVING CITY NEEDS DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS

Public Works areas of responsibility include Water and Wastewater, Streets and Drainage, and Fleet, and each play a role in maintaining and operating vital City infrastructure and associated services during times of crisis. Public Works service demands will increase as the general stay-at-home population increases in association with the county-wide Stay at Home order. City staff is continually working to refine staffing levels and schedules to ensure efficient use and distribution of forces to meet service demands in a sustainable manner. Public Works is committed to serving the needs of our residents throughout this ongoing crisis. Public Works staff would like to share the following information with the public:

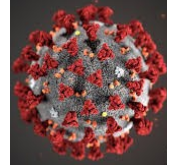
* Drinking water from your household tap is safe and regulatory compliant and subject to the most stringent State and Federal water quality standards. COVID-19 is not known to survive the regulatory required disinfectant levels within public drinking water distribution systems. Treatment level, distribution pressure, and disinfectant levels are key to ensuring safe drinking water delivery. Ensuring safe delivery of regulatory compliant drinking water is considered a high priority essential service for all communities during times of crisis.

* Bottled water is a choice that many choose for various reasons. It is a wise necessity during hurricane preparation because weather and other natural disaster events can produce high winds, floods, and other physical forces that can potentially damage critical utility infrastructure. The ongoing COVID-19 related issues bring virtually no physical threat to utility infrastructure, making Public Water System drinking water one the safest essential life-sustaining products available.

* Flushable wipes, excessive paper products, excessive disposal of harmful products, and excessive grease are all enemies of wastewater collection, conveyance, and treatment systems. Individually or combined, these nasty additions to the sanitary sewer system can contribute to blocked sewer mains, damage and performance issues to pumps, and reduced treatment levels at the treatment plant. Why is this so important now? Because so many more of our residents are at home and have a concentrated impact to our Wastewater System.

BEST COVID-19 PRACTICES FOR KEEPING YOUR FAMILY SAFE

- There is currently no vaccine to prevent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).
- **The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus.**
- The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person.
 - * Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
 - * Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks.
 - * These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.



SOME RECENT STUDIES HAVE SUGGESTED THAT COVID-19 MAY BE SPREAD BY PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT SHOWING SYMPTOMS.

CLEAN YOUR HANDS OFTEN

- **Wash your hands** often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, **use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.** Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
- **AVOID TOUCHING YOUR EYES, NOSE, AND MOUTH WITH UNWASHED HANDS.**

AVOID CLOSE CONTACT

- **Avoid close contact** with people who are sick
- **Stay home as much as possible.**
- Put **distance between yourself and other people.**
 - * Remember that some people without symptoms may be able to spread virus.
 - * Keeping distance from others is especially important for people who are at higher risk of getting very sick.

Cover your mouth and nose with a cloth face cover when around others

- You could spread COVID-19 to others even if you do not feel sick.
- Everyone should wear a cloth face cover when they have to go out in public, for example to the grocery store or to pick up other necessities.
 - * Cloth face coverings should not be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.
 - * The cloth face cover is meant to protect other people in case you are infected.
 - * Do NOT use a facemask meant for a healthcare worker.
 - * Continue to keep about 6 feet between yourself and others. The cloth face cover is not a substitute for social distancing.

Cover coughs and sneezes

- **If you are in a private setting and do not have on your cloth face covering, remember to always cover your mouth and nose** with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow.
- **Throw used tissues** in the trash.

IMMEDIATELY WASH YOUR HANDS WITH SOAP AND WATER FOR AT LEAST 20 SECONDS. IF SOAP AND WATER ARE NOT READILY AVAILABLE, CLEAN YOUR HANDS WITH A HAND SANITIZER THAT CONTAINS AT LEAST 60% ALCOHOL.

CLEAN AND DISINFECT

Clean AND disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily. This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks. **If surfaces are dirty, clean them:** Use detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.

REMEMBER WATER CONSERVATION

With lots of our citizens working from home and homeschooling children, residential water usage will increase and we'd like to make sure our Hitchcock customers are not surprised at the end of the month with an unusually high water bill.

With all this togetherness, there's going to be lots of handwashing, more dishes, maybe some laundry that would otherwise not have been washed as frequently - maybe some will get bored and decide to wash those curtains that haven't been taken down in a few years - after all, it is time for spring cleaning! Some will also finally get to that honey-do list, which might include power washing the driveway or house, extra watering in the garden or yard, and washing the cars.

While the City will not be interrupting water service for non-payment of the bill at this time, the customer is still responsible for full payment of the bill at some point. We have developed a plan, as this pandemic will be over eventually, and we are expecting to have to allow our financially constrained customers more time to pay or find other ways and means to allow everyone to get back to normal. Charges will continue to accrue on customer accounts, so those bills will have to eventually be paid - those services are going to increase, due to the water being used while people are staying home.

The current policy is to work with our customers who are experiencing financial difficulties to submit partial payments on their bill over a period of time. That's why we are strongly encouraging our customers to remember water conservation and to remind the members of your household to do the same.

As always, we are here for our customers, so if you have any questions please call (409) 986-5591 and we will try to assist you in any way possible.

MIXING CLEANING SUPPLIES



The City would like to warn residents to be cautious before mixing cleaning supplies. Combining certain products can result in harmful chemicals mixing, which could be harmful to you and your family.

DO NOT MIX THESE CLEANING PRODUCTS:

Bleach + Vinegar - Bleach and vinegar mixture produces chlorine gas, which can cause coughing, breathing problems, burning and watery eyes.

Bleach + Ammonia – Bleach and ammonia produces a toxic gas called chloramine. It causes shortness of breath and chest pain.

Bleach + Rubbing Alcohol – Bleach and rubbing alcohol makes chloroform, which is highly toxic.

Hydrogen Peroxide + Vinegar – This combination makes peracetic/peroxyacetic acid, which can be highly corrosive.

HOW TO CONTACT US

NAME	TITLE	E-MAIL	PHONE NUMBER
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LEROY THOMAS	WATER/WASTEWATER SUPERINTENDENT		(409)761-0737
BILL GARVIN	WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT OPERATOR	billgarvin@yahoo.com	(409)986-5591
ANIMAL CONTROL			(409) 948-2485
MOSQUITO CONTROL			(281) 337-4289
GARBAGE COLLECTION	AMERIWASTE		(281) 331-8400
AFTER HOUR WATER/ SEWER			(409)986-5559
AFTER HOUR WASTE WATER TREATMENT PLANT / LIFT STATION			(409)986-5559
NON EMERGENCY POLICE			(409)986-5559